

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

# *Horizon*

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

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THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF SOCIAL LIFE AND THE BIOLOGICAL  
BASIS OF CO-OPERATION BY M. F. ASHLEY MONTAGU

A CRANK IN ISRAEL BY JACOB WEINSHALL

CONTEMPORARY SCULPTORS: VIII—THOUGHTS AROUND  
ALBERTO GIACOMETTI BY MICHEL LEIRIS

CENTENNIAL OF A SUICIDE: THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES  
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VOL. XIX

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Vol. XIX No. 114 June 1949

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# COMMENT

THE first article in this number proposes a scientific justification for the human desire to do good to others. The articles which follow are all concerned with examples of lonely genius, frustrated in the case of Beddoes and the 'Crank in Israel' gelded by bourgeois values of the nineteenth century in the case of Swinburne, realized perhaps only in the formidable contemporary figure of the Swiss sculptor Giacometti. We came up once more against the truth that although it is perfectly clear to many artists, philosophers, men of religion, how we must act to be saved from modern means of self-destruction it is almost impossible for them to convince other people. The particular note of the mid-century is hopelessness, and the artists who reflect the feeling of their time have to struggle against this desperate indifference, not in the public only, but in themselves. The robust and elderly with a pre-1914 intellectual formation are able to do this; very few others can and the young are perhaps the weakest of all. There is a kind of galloping demoralization of the West which is affecting everybody. America cannot save us, for it is more demoralized than anywhere; it is unlikely that Russia, beneath the veneer, is any better; French humanism or English gentility may preserve a few pockets but they cannot inspire us because the truly modern world to which we all shut our eyes is engulfing us too fast and brings with it a complete negation of the aesthetic values of the past. The great artists of the past, despite the love lavished on them by scholars and aesthetes, are becoming more and more remote and unfamiliar. They are not replaced by others because we are moving into a world of non-art. One has only to compare the world of the long sea voyage: sunsets—leisure—complete works of so-and-so—with the still mildly aesthetic world of the train and then with the completely incurious existence of the air-passenger with his few reassuring leaflets issued by the company, his meals wrapped up in cellophane in a cardboard box, his copy of *Time* in case the sleeping pill doesn't work. This unseeing, unreading traveller is a symbol of the new public. Poetry for this civilization may well cease to exist, for no one except a few professors will possess the necessary ear to follow its subtleties. Reading aloud is almost extinct and the poet who wrestles with his subtle tone-effects secures his victories for himself alone. The hopeless are the

irresponsible, the irresponsible are the lazy: we must accustom ourselves to a reading public which is both too slothful and too restless to read until a sense of values is restored to it. The position of one or two eminent poets like Mr. Eliot and Dr. Sitwell, eminent partly because they have become tribal medicine men and not because their poems are yet as understood and appreciated as they could be, must not blind us to the years of neglect they suffered or to the terrible plight of many younger poets who, with all their talent, are reduced to poverty and drudgery because their music cannot reach the public ear, waxy with digests, loud-speakers, mikes and cinema organs. Meanwhile, with literature rapidly becoming a lost cause, editors of newspapers with large circulations still call for books to be withdrawn on grounds of obscenity. The demon of sex, whether normal or abnormal, must at all costs be kept away from the bedside where the average Englishman (and his womenfolk) frightened of love, aggressive to art, exhausted by war, soaked in black tea and watery beer, shuffles his tobacco-stained fingers round the *News of the World*. There is a famous Dr. Sullivan in America, author of a system of his own [HORIZON No. 79], who greets his new internes at the Mental Hospital where he works, with the words: 'There is one thing I wish you to remember while you work under me. In the present state of society the patient is right and you are wrong.' He may still save a Beddoes or a Swinburne.

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M. F. ASHLEY MONTAGU

# THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF SOCIAL LIFE AND THE BIOLOGICAL BASIS OF CO-OPERATION

THE views to be presented in what follows are the result of a series of researches calculated to throw some light upon the manner in which the organism is turned into a social human being. For the purposes of these researches it was necessary to inquire into the nature of social life in unicellular as well as in multicellular organisms. At the outset of the inquiry I had no idea where it would lead me, so that the conclusions at which I arrived at the termination of the investigation proved as dramatic as they were altogether unexpected. I believe that those conclusions may help men to a new understanding of mankind, of the meaning of life and of religion. The findings here presented give us a biological basis for religion and the living of the good life. Their consequences for personal, group, national and international relations are, I believe, considerable.

While definitions are truly meaningful only at the end of a discussion rather than at the beginning, it may be of assistance at this point to say that by *social* I mean all those interactions between persons or groups in which needs are satisfied. A need being understood as any desire experienced by the organism. By *cultural* I mean the particular form which characterizes the social activities of a group. By *life* is meant that condition in which a body exhibits the functions of *irritability* (response to stimuli), *motility* (movement), and *reproductivity* (multiplication). An *organism* is that organization of *interactive* elements which displays the functions of life in a self-consistent manner.

It is a fairly well established view that in the early stages of the development of life upon this earth the only forms of life were represented by single-celled plant and animal organisms. In

all these forms of life the single cell is a complete and self-supporting organism, which performs all the necessary vital functions for itself by means of the differentiated parts of its protoplasmic body. The amoeba and paramecium are the most familiar examples of such unicellular organisms. Such unicellular organisms always originate from a parent cell. In this fact, at this early stage, may be perceived the fundamental ground of social life, in the origin of one cell from another, in the relation of a daughter cell to the parent cell in the process of budding off or cleavage.

In amoeba reproduction is effected by simple fission of the parent body into another single cell; the plant cell haematococcus (which occurs in temporary pools of stagnant rain-water, or in the resting condition in dried up mud or dust) multiplies itself by simple fission within the old cell wall, a process which almost immediately results in the production of four new individuals (the same thing may happen in amoeba). Sometimes, however, another method of multiplication occurs in haematococcus. Instead of dividing into four relatively large zoospores a resting individual may divide into thirty-two or sixty-four much smaller microzooids which differ from the ordinary active form in the absence of the characteristic cell wall and its underlying vacuole.

The microzooids freely swim about by means of their flagella and sooner or later they come together in pairs, the members of each pair fusing with one another to form a single individual. This is an excellent example of sexual reproduction, the essential feature of which is the union or conjunction of two sexual cells or gametes (in this case the microzooids) to form a single cell, the zygote, which is the starting point of a fresh series of cell generations.

Whether reproduction or multiplication is secured by fission or by conjugation of gametes, the process is always an interacting one between parent and developing new organism. The parent organism supplies the vital tissues to the new organism, and in the process of fission there are metabolic and other physiologic exchanges before parent and daughter cells become organically independent of each other. This type of relationship in varying degrees is characteristic of all plant and animal life.

*It is here suggested that the fundamentally social nature of all living things has its origin in this physiological relationship between parent and offspring; in the fact that the two are for a time bound together*

in an interactive association; in the fact that the life of either one or the other is at some time dependent upon the potential or actual being of the other. Thus, for example, when the amoeba has reached a certain size it can only avoid death by dividing, and this it does. The new organism is, at least during the period of division, entirely dependent upon the proper functioning of its parent. In this dependency, brief as it may appear to our senses, we may perceive the origins of infant dependency in the higher animals and the very obvious social and, particularly in man, cultural consequences of that dependent relationship. In short, the universal fact of reproduction and all that that implies is the foundation of the social relationship which characterizes all living organisms. Where the offspring are born in a helpless condition and their post-natal care is more or less extended, we have a setting for the development of more complex forms of social life. As we have said, it is in the nature of the reproductive process that we see the basis for the development of social life, and the suggestion is that social life represents the response to organic drives, the expression of functions which are inextricably a part of the life of the organism. The universality of social life would seem to indicate as much.

No living organism is either solitary in its origin or solitary in its life. Every organism from the lowest to the highest is normally engaged in some sort of social life. The solitary animal is, in any species, an abnormal creature.

If the origin of social life owes its existence to the organic drives arising from and determined by the reproductive relationship, it is of more than passing interest to note that physically the multicellular organisms owe their origin to the same processes; that originally separate cells developed the habit of remaining attached together after division, as the spores in the encysted envelope of the parent amoeba might do to form a multicellular organism. Such an aggregation of cells would provide the means for the development of the multicellular higher animals. Such interactive cells would, by their increasing ability to co-operate, develop specialized functions, and increasingly complex relations. The multicellular organism is therefore to be regarded as the expression of increasing intercellular co-operation, in which the interdependent co-operating activities of its cellular masses function together, so that at all times the organism is able to function as a unit and as a whole.

With the development of this interpretation of the facts we reach the view not that society is an organism—which it is not—but that the organism is, in fact, a species of society. The organismal conception of society is today very generally discarded, yet while the notion of society as an organism cannot be justified a strong case can be made out for the organism as a form of society. Every word in Cooley's definition of society, for example, can be applied to the definition of an organism. 'Society is a complex of forms or processes each of which is living and growing by interaction with the others, the whole being so unified, that what takes place in one part affects all the rest. It is a vast tissue of reciprocal activity, differentiated into innumerable systems, some of them quite distinct, others not readily traceable, and all interwoven to such a degree that you see different systems according to the point of view you take.'<sup>1</sup>

The system which a multicellular organism constitutes can also be so defined. But there is much more to human society than is stated in Cooley's definition, though that definition will do as a description of society in general. It will not do as a definition of human society in particular because it omits any explicit reference to the fact that human society represents a development of mind, of interactive consciousnesses and the complex of relationships to which these give rise, in a sense quite different from that which might be conceived as possessed by the individual or masses of cells which are the interactive elements which constitute the organism. The units constituting human society are free, those constituting the organism are, for the most part, fixed. The greater part of a society can be destroyed without causing the death of its remaining units, whereas under similar conditions death would generally follow in organisms. A person in human society exercises his free will and his independent being in thought, feeling and action. This is not the case with regard to the cells which make up the organism. All this is not to say that there is no relation between the society of the organism and human society, but simply that there is a very real difference between the two forms of society, and that one must not be identified or confused with the other. The organismal analogy as applied to human society is quite false, but the relationship of the behaviour of the cells which

<sup>1</sup> Charles H. Cooley, *The Social Process*, Scribners, New York, 1918, p. 28.

in interaction constitute the organism and human society is a phylogenetic one, and this is far from being false.

Whatever the nature of the factors involved in the co-operation of cells cohering to form functioning many-celled organisms, such co-operation does exhibit the elements of a social act, and it would seem clear that such acts originally represent the expression of a drive which has its origin in the reproductive-dependency relationship of parent cell and daughter cell, and that the tendency of living things to form societies is coeval with life itself. Finally, that human society represents the culmination of this tendency, and that, in virtue of what seems to be the accident of the development of man's remarkable psychical powers, his great plasticity, and freedom from biologically predetermined forms of behaviour, human society has assumed a unique form, it has become highly culturalized.

The fact that such diverse groups as insects and mammals have developed social life indicates beyond any reasonable doubt the existence in organic life of deep-seated potentialities toward socialization, or rather what might be more properly called 'societization', the process of forming society.

Allee has presented the evidence which shows that among the simpler plants and animals there exists a sort of unconscious co-operation of automatic mutualism.<sup>1</sup> This is primarily reflected in the tendency of animals to aggregate together while the biological benefits which follow from their activities is exhibited in the significantly greater survival rate of organisms living in fairly dense populations as compared with those living in sparse populations or in an environment in which they are isolated. Varying with the nature of the environment the isolated animal will, in general, be retarded in growth or irremediably damaged or suffer death where the animal living in association with others will increase in size and in the speed of its physiological reactions, tend to recover quickly from wounds, and survive more often where the solitary animal would die. For example, planarian worms which have been exposed to ultraviolet radiation disintegrate more rapidly when isolated than when they are together with other worms. They survive exposure to ultraviolet radiation better when crowded while being radiated, and there is a much higher

<sup>1</sup> Warder C. Allee, *Animal Aggregations*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1931; *The Social Life of Animals*, W. W. Norton, New York, 1938.



death-rate among those which are isolated a few minutes after irradiation than among those which are left together. Goldfish placed together in groups of ten in a suspension of colloidal silver survived much longer than those which were placed in similar suspensions alone. Allee writes: 'When exposed to the toxic colloidal silver the grouped fish shared between them a dose easily fatal for any one of them; the slime they secreted changed much of the silver into a less toxic form. In the experiment as set up the suspension was somewhat too strong for any to survive; with a weaker suspension some or all of the grouped animals would have lived; as it was, the group gained for its members a longer life. In nature they could have had many more minutes for rain to have diluted the water or some other disturbance to have cleared up the poison and given the fish a chance for complete recovery.'<sup>1</sup>

This experiment illustrates in the case of these goldfish, and presumably holds true for all other aquatic organisms, the physico-chemical basis of the advantage which lies in numbers. Allee's studies on the rate of cleavage of the fertilized egg of the common sea-urchin *Arbacia* show that, with few exceptions, the rate is more rapid in the denser clusters of eggs than in isolated fellow eggs. Protozoons, it has been experimentally shown, grow more rapidly when they are introduced in large numbers into a sterile medium of relatively simple salts than if the cultures are started with only a few organisms. The biological advantages are all in the crowding (not overcrowding), whereas separation or isolation would appear to be so lethal to the organism that we can be fairly certain it never occurs in nature. What an optimal population size for any group is in nature will depend upon the group and its environment, but thus far the evidence strongly indicates that optimal numbers present in a given situation have certain positive survival values and positively exert stimulating effects on the growth of individuals and the increase of populations (Allee, pp. 106-7). Thus, for example, Darling has found that among herring gulls the members of larger colonies stimulate each other to commence sexual activities earlier than when the colonies are smaller, and furthermore, there tends to be a speeding-up of egg-laying, so that breeding activities are more intense while they last. The survival value of the short spread of time between laying and hatching lies in the fact that a greater number of young gulls

<sup>1</sup> *The Social Life of Animals*, pp. 56-7.

survive under such conditions than do so where the colony is small and the spread of hatching time therefore longer.<sup>1</sup>

The unconscious kind of mutualism or co-operation which universally exists among lower animals, not commonly regarded as social or viewed only as partially social, undoubtedly represents an earlier stage in the development of social life among the higher animals. It is important to understand in its full implications the fact that this principle of mutualism, of co-operation, is the fundamental principle which appears to have governed the relations of organisms from the very first, and the organic basis for this, the explanation which best fits the facts, would appear to lie in the nature of the reproductive relationship, with the accompanying mutual interrelations which are for a time maintained between parent and developing organism. Whatever of truth there may be in this it is certain that the conception of nature 'red in tooth and claw', in which animals are conceived to be in a constant state of warfare with one another, in which the 'struggle for existence' and 'the survival of the fittest' are the two cardinal principles of 'natural selection', is grossly one-sided and false. Activities which may collectively be called the struggle for existence do characterize the behaviour of most animals, but such activities are not all that characterizes their behaviour, the two forms of behaviour complementing rather than being in opposition to one another. In what might be called the tough Darwinian period of the last century, the concept of natural selection in its crude form so completely dominated the thought of biologists and Spencerian sociologists—and practically every sociologist was a Spencerian in those days—that the existence of co-operative behaviour on a large scale, though known to some biologists and certainly well understood by Darwin, was virtually completely neglected in favour of the quite properly regarded important principle of natural selection. Darwin's great book, published in November 1859, was entitled *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. And that essentially is what throughout the last forty years of the nineteenth century most biologists were engaged in proving. The voices which were raised in defence of co-operation were drowned out in the din created by the one-sided proponents of natural

<sup>1</sup> E. Fraser Darling, *Bird Flocks and the Breeding Cycle*, Cambridge: at the University Press, 1938.

selection. It was not that the natural selectionists denied the existence of co-operation, but that they passed it by and neglected it in favour of natural selection. The extreme viewpoint of the natural selectionists was stated by that great man T. H. Huxley in 1888, in his 'struggle-for-life' manifesto, 'The Struggle for Existence and its Bearing Upon Man' (*Nineteenth Century*, February 1888). The reply made by Prince Petr Kropotkin in eight articles published between the years 1890 and 1896 in the pages of the *Nineteenth Century*, and in 1902 published in book form as *Mutual Aid a Factor of Evolution*, made, and has steadily continued to make, a deep impression upon all who read it. It succeeded in drawing attention to substantial works which had already dealt with the subject, and in focusing attention upon an important and much underrated factor in evolution. Giddings, in *The Principles of Sociology* (1896), was the first sociologist to emphasize the importance of co-operation in evolution, and among English publicists Henry Drummond, for example, chose for his Boston Lowell Lectures, published in 1894 as *The Ascent of Man*, the exposition of the thesis that while in nature there was indeed a struggle for life there was also such a thing as the struggle for the life of others. A goodly number of works having the same theme for their subject have been published since the beginning of the century.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Yves Delage and Marie Goldsmith, *The Theories of Evolution*, Huebsch, New York, 1912; Hermann Reinheimer, *Evolution of Co-operation; A Study in Bioeconomics*, Kegan Paul, 1913; *Symbiosis, A Socio-Physiological Study of Evolution*, Headley Brothers, 1920; William M. Wheeler, *Social Life Among Insects*, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1923; 'Social Evolution' in *Human Biology and Racial Welfare* (edited by Edmund V. Cowdry), Hoeber, New York, 1930; John M. Macfarlane, *The Causes and Course of Organic Evolution*, Macmillan, New York, 1918; William Patten, *The Grand Strategy of Evolution*, Richard B. Badger, Boston, 1920; Warder C. Allee, *Animal Aggregations*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1931; *The Social Life of Animals*, W. W. Norton, New York, 1938; 'Where Angels Fear to Tread: A Contribution From General Sociology to Human Ethics', *Science*, Vol. 97, 1943, pp. 518-25; Charles Sherrington, *Man on His Nature*, Macmillan, New York, 1941; Alfred E. Emerson, 'Basic Comparisons of Human and Insect Societies', in *Biological Symposia*, Vol. 8, 1942, pp. 163-77, and 'The Biological Basis of Social Co-operation', *Illinois Academy of Science Transactions*, Vol. 39, 1946, pp. 9-18; R. Gerard, 'Higher Levels of Integration', in *Biological Symposia*, Vol. 8, 1942, pp. 67-87; Ralph S. Lillie, *General Biology and Philosophy of Organism*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1945; Thomas H. Huxley and Julian Huxley, *Touchstone for Ethics*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1947, and Samuel J. Holmes, *Life and Morals*, Macmillan, New York, 1948.

At the present time the principle of co-operation is in a fair way to becoming established as the most important factor in the survival of animal groups. Summing up the modern point of view, Allee says: 'After much consideration, it is my mature consideration, contrary to Herbert Spencer, that the co-operative forces are biologically the more important and vital. The balance between the co-operative, altruistic tendencies and those which are disoperative and egoistic is relatively close. Under many conditions the co-operative forces lose. In the long run, however, the group-centred, more altruistic drives are slightly stronger.'

'If co-operation had not been the stronger force, the more complicated animals, whether arthropods or vertebrates, could not have evolved from simple ones, and there would have been no men to worry each other with their distressing and biologically foolish wars. While I know of no laboratory experiments that make a direct test of this problem, I have come to this conclusion by studying the implications of many experiments which bear on both sides of the problem and from considering the trends of organic evolution in nature. Despite many known appearance to the contrary, human altruistic drives are as firmly based as is man himself. Our tendencies towards goodness are as innate as our tendencies toward intelligence; we could do well with more of both.'<sup>1</sup>

The tendentious habit of thinking of evolution in terms of the struggle for existence, by means of which, it is believed, the fittest are alone selected for survival while the weakest are ruthlessly condemned to extinction, is not only an incorrect view of the facts, but is a habit of thought which has done a considerable amount of harm. Only by omitting any reference to such an important evolutionary force as the principle of co-operation, and by viewing evolution as a process of continuous conflict between all living things can men be led to conclude that survival or development depends on successful aggression. Omitting important facts and basing their arguments on false premises, the tough Darwinians could only arrive at false conclusions. As Allee says: 'Today, as in Darwin's time, the average biologist apparently still thinks of a natural selection which acts primarily on egoistic

<sup>1</sup> Warder C. Allee, 'Where Angels Fear to Tread: A Contribution from General Sociology to Human Ethics', *Science*, Vol. 97, 1943, pp. 518-25, p. 521.

principles, and intelligent fellow-thinkers in other disciplines, together with the much cited man-in-the-street, cannot be blamed for taking the same point of view.<sup>1</sup>

Certainly aggressiveness exists in nature, but there is also a healthy non-ruthless competition, and there also exist very strong drives towards social and co-operative behaviour. These forces do not operate independently but together, as a whole, and the evidence strongly indicates that of all these drives the principle of co-operation is the most dominant, and biologically the most important. The co-existence of so many different species of animals throughout the world is a sufficient testimony to the importance of that principle. It is probable that man owes more to the operation of this principle than to any other in his own biological and social evolution. Indeed, without this principle of co-operation, of sociability and mutual aid, the progress of organic life, the improvement of the organism, and the strengthening of the species, becomes utterly incomprehensible.

We may, by induction from the facts, arrive at a generalization or law to the effect that the greater the co-operative behaviour exhibited by the members of any group the more harmoniously socially organized is that group likely to be. An interesting example of this law is to be found in the social ants in which the principle of co-operation has been developed to the limit of fixity. But, as Schneirla has suggested, it were perhaps more accurate to speak of *bio-social facilitation* rather than of co-operation here because of the psychological limitations of social ants.<sup>2</sup> The distinction is, however, simply one of organization at qualitatively different levels. The principle of co-operation has been resumed by a group of distinguished biologists in the statement that the probability of survival of individual or living things increases with the degree in which they harmoniously adjust themselves to each other and to their environment.<sup>3</sup> While A. E. Emerson has concluded that the dominant directional trend in evolution is toward a controlled balance of the important factors within the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 520.

<sup>2</sup> T. C. Schneirla, 'Problems in the Biopsychology of Social Organization', *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 41, 1946, pp. 385-402.

<sup>3</sup> C. Leake, 'Ethicogenesis', *Proceedings of the Philosophical Society of Texas*, Vol. 10, 1944, pp. 7-34.



system. 'Human society co-operatively brings the social environment under control for the better survival of the species.'<sup>1</sup>

If we would seek for one word which describes 'society' or 'the social' better than any other, that word is co-operation. The important point to grasp here is that contrary to the beliefs of the struggle-for-survival school of thought, man does not have to create a co-operative mood for himself to erect over the tufa of his savage strivings to be otherwise. Not at all. The impulses towards co-operative behaviour are already present in him at birth, and all they require is cultivation. As for any other kind of strivings, the infant of most vertebrates is equipped with the ability to compete with the universe for attention, and it generally succeeds in eliciting co-operative behaviour, usually from one or both parents. In the process of socialization a certain quantity of the energies of aggressiveness are transformed into co-operative processes. The reproductive process is a co-operative one, and in addition development as one of a litter or group of siblings represents another early experience in the development of co-operation; development within a family represents a still further experience in the learning and practice of co-operation.

To summarize briefly the points we have arrived at thus far: First, some sort of social life is present in even the lowest organisms, and that such a thing as a completely asocial variety of animal probably does not exist. Secondly, social life confers distinct advantages, biological, and social, upon the animals participating in it. Thirdly, the dominant principle of social life is probably coeval with life itself, otherwise it could not have become established, and fourthly that the organic basis of social behaviour is to be found in the nature of the reproductive relationship between parent and offspring.

Consider the reproductive process and all that it implies. Reproduction is based on interaction and interrelationships of an interdependent kind, and these determine the pattern of dependency of one organism upon another. Furthermore, continuity of substance and physiological function is thus established between parent and offspring, and this implies the continuity of all living things. Our kinship is with the whole world of life. That kinship demands that we fulfil our natural obligations to our more lowly

<sup>1</sup> A. E. Emerson, 'The Biological Basis of Social Co-operation', *Illinois Academy of Science Transactions*, Vol. 39, 1946, pp. 9-18.

relations in sympathy and understanding, recognizing that we are all of the same remote origin, merely different forms of the same world-stuff.

Is it not a remarkable fact that the reproductive process which is concerned with the creation of life itself should constitute the fundamental social relationship? Yet nothing could be more appropriate. The pattern is determined by the fact that the maternal and foetal organisms are for a time bound together in interacting association, and the foetus is entirely *dependent* upon the maternal organism for its sustenance, for the satisfaction of its needs. In utero the process proceeds largely upon the vegetative level. But at birth the dependent relationship becomes more active and complex, both on the part of the new-born and the maternal organism or its substitute. The dependency of the new-born is a continuation of the dependency of the foetus, as the dependency of the child and adult is a continuation of the dependency of the infant, a dependency which has its origin in the once inseparable connexion between the organism and that other organism out of which it developed.

Dependency may be defined as the relation of the organism to the conditions which support it. In the new-born it is doubtful whether dependency is experienced as anything more than a generalized, diffused tonal state, related to its more specific urges, satisfactions and dissatisfactions. The generalized dependency state never assumes a definite form in the absence of socializing agents, as is testified by the complete failure of development of personality in isolated children. To be dependent means to rely upon some other organism or organisms for the satisfaction of one's needs. The consciousness of a distinct feeling of dependency cannot be developed in the absence of factors which produce a growing awareness in the infant that practically all his satisfactions are obtained through the responses made to his basic needs by other persons. Such an awareness is, as it were, a precipitate of recurring experiences of unsatisfied cravings which have eventually been satisfied by others, but for whose intervention those cravings would never have been satisfied. The child learns that it is dependent, and the whole of its social training teaches it, in effect, to become more and more dependent. Interdependency is the social state. Non-dependent individuality is the non-social state.

The need for love simply represents the growth of a condition

originating in the impulses of the dependency state. These impulses are developed by those who help to give greater form to the dependent state by satisfying the infant's needs. The infant loves those who satisfy its needs. It hates those who fail to satisfy or who frustrate the satisfaction of its needs. In this latter sense one may readily perceive that hatred is but love frustrated.

The process of caring for the infant consists principally in satisfying its needs. This process represents the commencement of the socialization of the person, the preparation of the person for participation in the social group. To telescope much into a few words, as the child matures and the socializing process continues, with its frustrations as well as its satisfactions, the child becomes more and more firmly bound to the socializing agent, more and more dependent rather than more free, and this social binding continues throughout life. This view of the development of the person cannot be too strongly emphasized, particularly in the land in which the myth of rugged American individualism still prevails. The conventional view of the person in socializing process as developing to greater and greater individuality, is a seriously misleading one. Of course, every person has a unique personality in the sense that it is never identically like that of any other person, and the differences between personalities are important and valuable, and tend to become more distinct with age. This is something very much to be thankful for. But it must be realized that every one of these differences has developed under the influence of socializing factors, and that were it not for the creative action of those socializing factors, those functional-structural differences, the pattern of psychic differences which characterizes each person would not exist. The 'individual' is a myth. A creature apart from a social group is nothing but an organic being. The member of a social group is a *person*, a personality developed under the moulding influence of social interstimulation. The person is a set of social relationships.

The 'rugged American Individualist' is no more an individualist than is a soldier sniping at the enemy. Both behave as they do because they have been subordinated to imperatives which in each case are functions of their social conditioning. They act as they do because they are the results of certain historically conditioned social processes. They act as they do, not because they are independent individuals, but because they are dependent persons

bound to their social group by ties which cause them to desire to maintain their relationships in that group in the manner, in each case, allowed and encouraged by the group. Freewill the person has and is constantly exercising, but it is a freedom and a will which acts strictly within the limits determined by the pattern of the social group. In short, the person is an interdependent system of social relationships which may by abstraction alone be recognized as a unit, as an individual. As Leo Loeb has remarked in a masterly work, 'In consequence of the more and more intricate interaction between environment and psychical-social individuality, a separation between individuality and environment, especially the social environment, becomes impossible.'<sup>1</sup>

And that is the truth which must forever shatter what I insist on calling the pathetic fallacy, the organismal fallacy which maintains that man is essentially a function of his genes. The biologically exclusive sacredness of the individual is a chimera not only for man but for all other animal groups. The biology of an earlier day may have cried 'the individual for itself'. To this the most distinguished of living physiologists, Sir Charles Sherrington, has made the proper reply in one of the great books of our time. 'The individual? What are the most successful individuals which Life has to show? The multi-cellular. And what has gone to their making? The multi-cellular organism is in itself a variant from the perennial antagonism of cell and cell. Instead of that eternal antagonism it is making use of relatedness to bind cell to cell for co-operation. The multi-cellular organism stood for a change, in so far, from conflict between cell and cell to harmony between cell and cell. Its coming was, we know now, pregnant with an immense advance for the whole future of life upon the globe. It was potential of the present success of living forms upon the planet. Implicit in it was for one thing the emergence of recognizable mind. It was among the many celled organisms that recognizable mind first appeared. It is surely more than mere analogy to liken to those small beginnings of multi-cellular life of millions of years ago the slender beginnings of altruism today. Evolution has constantly dealt with the relation between physical and mental as more than mere analogy. The bond of cohesion now arising instead of being, as then, one of material contact and

<sup>1</sup> Leo Loeb, *The Biological Basis of Individuality*, C. C. Thomas, Springfield, Illinois, 1944, pp. 651-2.

interchange between related cell lives is in its nature mental. It is a projection of the self by sympathy with other life into organismal situations besides its immediate own. It is altruism as passion. It marks, we may think, at the present time the climax of mind.<sup>1</sup>

To bind cell to cell for co-operation, that is the essence of social life. No cell is more intimately bound to another than man is to his fellows and his social group. The binding of the individual to his group represents, in fact, a loss of individual freedom and a gain in personal freedom through more or less complete identification with the social group. An identification in which the wholeness of the person is preserved only because it is a functioning part of a greater whole—society. In this process the consciousness of self may actually increase, the sense of personal identity may become even more vivid, and one's bondage to one's society more firmly established than ever. 'Individuation', as the development of personal identity, is neither the contrary nor the contradictory of social identification, it is social identification.

As Robert Frost has said :

‘Men work together,’ I told him from the heart,  
‘Whether they work together or apart.’

The organism becomes a person with a definite identity only through the process of socialization, the process of becoming identified with a social group. The physiological dependency of the foetus and the new-born becomes, in society, a socially organized dependency, a social dependency in which the interacting person finds the meaning of his life in his relations with other persons and their thoughts and activities. Unheeded the physiologically dependent infant would die. Unheeded the socially dependent adult falls into an apathy which may lead to death.

The prolonged period of infant dependency in man produces interactive behaviour of a kind which within the first two years of the child's life determines the primary pattern of his subsequent social development. It is within this period that he learns to love others; the mother who has so consistently, intimately, and lovingly attended to his needs, the father, his brothers and sisters, and whoever else has participated in the process of satisfying his needs. Certain persons become to him the symbols of satisfaction,

<sup>1</sup> Charles Sherrington, *Man On His Nature*, Macmillan, New York, 1941, pp. 387-8.



for they are always the objects which provide him with the means of satisfaction, and the first conditioning which the child undergoes is this: that persons who have fairly consistently been the objects which have provided the infant with the means of satisfying its needs now become satisfying objects in themselves. The satisfaction of its basic needs becomes inseparably associated in the infant's mind with persons who have become linked with those satisfactions. The mother is, of course, normally the principal producer of satisfactions and she becomes the first love-object of the child. In this sequence of events can be seen the determinants, as it were in high relief, of the pattern of life which every person everywhere seeks to secure, namely, a state of dependency in which one's needs are satisfied by persons whom one (therefore) loves. What human beings desire most of all is to have their needs satisfied, security. They also want to feel dependent, either upon some mother-ideal, a deity, or other persons, or narcissistically upon themselves, but dependent they must feel. Man does not want to be independent, to be free in the sense of functioning independently of the interests of his fellows, freely and detached. This kind of negative independence leads to lonesomeness, isolation, and fear. What man wants is that positive freedom which follows the pattern of his life as an infant within the family, dependent security, the feeling that one is part of a group, accepted, wanted, loved and loving, the positive freedom which makes the development of the person emphatically a matter of personal realization in terms of his membership in the social group in the mutual interest of the person and of society, the opportunity to develop interdependently, not as an 'individual' but as a person.

It is when men erroneously begin to think that they can be independent of one another, the 'social isolationists', that they begin to frustrate and hate each other, that they do violence to all that they are and create psychological and social havoc. When men learn to understand how dependent they are upon one another, that they are interdependent, intermeshing beings in a great co-operative enterprise, that it is their nature to be affectionate, co-operative persons, when they understand that being anything else is to be in conflict with themselves and therefore with society, mankind will be a great deal healthier and happier than it is today.

We now know that if a child is inadequately loved it will

develop as an inadequate social being. Not only this, we now know that the organism is born with an innate need for love, with a need to respond to love, to be good, and co-operative. Were the infant's needs adequately satisfied he could not help but be good, that is, loving. All of man's natural inclinations are toward the development of goodness, toward the continuance of states of goodness and the discontinuance of unpleasant states.

The biological basis of love, of goodness, consists in the organism's drive to satisfy its basic needs in a manner which causes it to feel secure. Love is security. Mere satisfaction of basic needs is not enough. Needs must be satisfied in a particular manner, in a manner which is emotionally as well as physically satisfying. Babies, as well as adults, cannot live by bread alone.

It is in the organism's ever-present urge to feel secure that social life has its roots, and the only way in which this need can be satisfied is by love.

It is a discovery of the greatest possible significance for mankind that the ethical conception of love independently arrived at by almost all existing peoples is no mere artificial creation of man, but is grounded in the biological structure of man as a functioning organism. The implications of this discovery are of the very greatest importance, for it means that man's organic potentialities are so organized as to demand but one kind of satisfaction, a satisfaction which ministers to man's need for love, which registers love, which is given in terms of love, a satisfaction which is defined by the one word, *security*. This is what the person seeks all his life, and society, culture, and man's institutions, however inefficient some of them may be, all exist to secure that one fundamental satisfaction. The emotional need for love is as definite and compelling as the need for food. The basic needs of man must be satisfied in order that he may function on the organic level. But in order that he may function satisfactorily on the social plane the most fundamental of the basic needs must be satisfied in an emotionally adequate manner for personal security or equilibrium.

To conclude, then, we perceive that the biological basis of co-operation has its origins in the same sources as social behaviour, namely, in the process of reproduction; that social, co-operative behaviour is simply the continuation and development of the maternal-offspring relationship. Co-operative, social behaviour is therefore as old as life itself, and the direction of evolution has, in

man, been increasingly directed toward the fuller development of co-operative behaviour. When social behaviour is not co-operative it is diseased behaviour. The dominant principle which informs all behaviour which is biologically healthy is love. Love, social behaviour, co-operation, and security mean very much the same thing. Without love there can be no healthy social behaviour, co-operation, or security. To love thy neighbour as thyself is not simply good text for Sunday morning sermons, but perfectly sound biology.

At a period in the history of the world in which men have turned their faces against each other, instead of turning the other cheek, these truths need to be cried aloud from every citadel of learning.

Men who do not love one another are sick. They are sick not from any sickness arising within themselves, but from a sickness which the false values of their societies has thrust upon them. The belief in false values, in competition instead of co-operation, in class and race and national prejudice instead of love, in narrow selfish interests instead of altruism, in atomism (especially atom-bombism) instead of universalism, in the value of money instead of the value of man, represents asocial man turning upon all that is biologically good in him.

Science shows us that the way to survival and happiness, for all mankind, is through love and co-operation, that do what we will our drives toward goodness are as biologically determined as are our drives toward breathing. Our highly endowed potentialities for social life have been used to pervert and deny their very nature, and this has led us close to the brink of disaster, a disaster which spells doom unless we realize what we have done and take the proper steps to undo it before it is too late. For we cannot deny the power of the world forces which we share with all life and which have reached their highest development in our potentialities as human beings, without destroying ourselves.

Our world at the present time is largely directed by criminally irresponsible adventurers and cynical and complacent men who have grown old in the ways of self-interest and ultranationalism. Unless their place is taken by men of understanding and humility, whose guiding principle is love, the world of man is doomed.

The life of every human being is a part of our own, for we are involved in mankind, and each one of us in the Western world has

become a problem in search of a solution. We now know the answer to the problem. It is up to us to make it known, and to apply it. In the immortal words of a minister of the gospel of the first discoverer of these truths,

‘No man is an *Island*, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the *Continent*, a part of the *main*; if a *Clod* be washed away by the *Sea*, *Europe* is the less, as well as if a *Promontory* were, as well as if a *Manor* of thy *friends* or of *thine own* were; any man’s *death* diminishes *me*, because I am involved in *Mankind*; And therefore never send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; It tolls for thee.’<sup>1</sup>

## JACOB WEINSHALL

# A CRANK IN ISRAEL

*Translator’s Note.* Dr. Jacob Weinshall is a General Practitioner in Tel Aviv, who has published several biographical works in modern Hebrew. His speciality is political cranks. The following case-history of his patient B was written by him at my request, in the form of a letter addressed to me, during my recent stay in Tel Aviv in search of material for a book on Israel. It should be borne in mind that B died in 1945, and that the events refer to a period even earlier than that date—the troubled years of gestation of the new state.

A. K.

YOU have asked me to put down the circumstances of the illness and death of B, that eccentric whom you met in my house during your last visit to Israel, which was then still Palestine, in 1944. I am not sure whether my account of his case will satisfy the requirements of objectivity and logics, for the manner of B’s death was, as you know, a profound shock to me. If I were only involved as a doctor, it would be relatively simple for me to call his disease by its name, to list its symptoms in general, and those symptoms in particular which my patient displayed, and to add that for some years I knew that there was no hope of a complete cure. But as you know, he was not only my patient, but also my friend, and probably even more: a symbol of something which glimmers at the bottom of our minds, and that we are reluctant to face and admit into our consciousness. For his eccentricities—and at the beginning they were indeed no more than eccentricities—were a

<sup>1</sup> John Donne, *Devotions*, xvii, 1624 (Nonesuch edition, edited by John Hayward), Random House, New York, 1928, p. 538.

true expression of the collective unconscious, if I may use this somewhat abstract term, of the people of this country.

As you remember, he was an arrogant and quarrelsome companion, ever ready to discuss problems which have no beginning and no end. He antagonized people who were his well-wishers, and was a stickler about words and a casuist. He never took an interest in drawing practical inferences from a given situation; he was too preoccupied with its philosophical implications. He defended his views with the brilliance of the Viennese café wit, and had an offhand way of producing striking epigrams. It was this intellectual brilliance, his ability to open new vistas with a sleight-of-hand as it were, which attracted me first and made him into such a fascinating study.

He always remained a lazy and sterile vagabond, though his eyes devoured millions of printed words. He studied the daily papers with the devotion of the Orthodox Jew to his Talmud, and pondered over the meaning of every word which seemed to convey an inconsistency. He had an infallible instinct for sensing insincerities and lies, which provoked a rage in him that shook every nerve in his body.

He also had a weakness for old maps. There was a period in his life when he was completely penniless. Unable to concentrate on any productive work, he spent the alms received from his not too numerous friends on maps, which he mostly found in old school-books and manuals of strategy. He kept his collection in strict chronological order. It included a number of old books in the original edition and their later reprints. These he cherished particularly; each deviation from the original in the modern reprint had its specific meaning and explanation. These torn and tattered maps which the antiquarians of Tel Aviv were delighted to get rid of for a few piastres, served as a proof for his theory that the whole history of the world could be reduced to a great swindle and juggling with the names of Peoples, Countries, Provinces and Towns. He was, for instance, infuriated by the nondescript Anglo-American term 'Middle East', which he regarded as a deliberate psychological ruse designed to rob all nations of this part of the world, but particularly the Jews, of their individuality and place in the sun. He did not recognize the Lebanon—for him it remained North Canaan. 'Transjordan' was a semantic trick of the British Colonial Office. Never, he explained, had the Jordan been



a state frontier; on the contrary, it was the Jordan which, like the Nile, had made this country into an indivisible historical and political unit. There was no such country as the Northern Hejaz either; it was called the Majdan as in Solomon's day. He was a jealous guardian of names and shook with rage if anybody said Nablus instead of Shekhem, or Sheikh Abrek instead of Shaarayim. He did not extend recognition to Haifa; its correct name was Shikhmona. To use the wrong name amounted in his eyes to high treason. It was a form of neurosis which I have never come across before—a geographical neurosis as it were.

It was fascinating to watch him poring over his stacks of daily papers. He was in a constant fury over the primitivity of our Hebrew phraseology and its inflated, cheaply ponderous style—made even more turgid by careless printing, which causes the Aramaic letters to look suspiciously like their Babylonian runic original. He felt responsible for the style, the political content, the quality of the printing, and lived the part of an imaginary super editor-in-chief, proof-reader and censor all in one. When he agreed with a phrase he nodded his head, brought the paper close to his eyes, and took off his pince-nez which, for a moment, made him look much younger than the man in his late fifties which he was. Sometimes he flew into a tantrum, flung the paper aside, and took slow sips of his coffee, which had meanwhile got cold; it was the only remedy and counter-poison against the misdeeds of politicians and scribblers—which were ultimately all his own responsibility. It was high time, he explained, for people to understand that we all live in a narrow space between two mirrors. Every unreasonable action is reflected and reproduced in them a thousandfold. We are under observation, we are being constantly weighed, though we are unaware of it and feel lighter than a feather. We can never step off the scale of the balance and should never cease measuring ourselves; but even when we do stop we retain our weight—a passive weight on an alien scale.

With all this he never made a ridiculous impression—not even when, in the middle of one of his tirades, it occurred to one that he was unable to leave his table at the café because he did not yet know who was going to pay his bill today, and also because his trousers were so badly patched on their seat that he did not dare get up and always had to leave as the last guest. He was pathetic in a singular manner—I would call it the pathos of responsibility.

An aging man with the glamorous past of a near-millionaire in Vienna, who had lost, like the rest of us, his possessions partly through his own, partly through alien, guilt, he felt utterly useless in this country of ours; only his pathos of responsibility kept him going and gave meaning to his life.

He tried to do some business deals; but he was always cheated, sometimes by people whom he had done great favours in the past. That was their right; they were younger, cleverer and more ruthless. But where the life of the spirit is concerned, no advantages of youth and ruthlessness are recognized. Here he could hold his own as a teacher, an expert on international relations, a Minister without Portfolio, and most of all as a seismograph which registered the slightest movements of the collective conscience.

You probably remember the episode of his overcoat. This overcoat was the only surviving relic of the golden past—of the cabarets of Budapest and Paris, the holiday trips to the Norwegian Fjords, the business journeys in sleeping cars to Berlin and Warsaw. It was an overcoat much too dazzling for Tel Aviv, of the type once called, if I remember rightly, an 'Ulster': made of a heavy black fabric, rather narrow in the waist, and with a breast-pocket from which a white handkerchief had once stuck out. It was particularly difficult to adapt to the Tel Aviv climate. And the more the body of B shrank under the effects of age and starvation, the heavier became for him the burden of that monster of an overcoat. Yet it was a carrier of happy memories—memories of a certain woman who had vanished into the unknown, and memories of the royal honours accorded to him on board the little cattle-ship of illegal immigrants whose passengers had taken a vow to scuttle themselves if intercepted, for they were nearing the end of their tether and the ship the end of its steam. Thanks to the magic of the overcoat, they had listened respectfully to his lectures during the three winter-weeks on the sea—the last week without food, the last three days without drinking water—and had gratefully accepted the healing balsam of his Viennese irony, until they were all thrown ashore somewhere on the dunes of Tel Aviv. Once he had reached shore, however, the overcoat was transformed into a vulgar garment and had to serve base utilitarian purposes. During the day its role was to cover the appalling rents and holes in his suit and even to camouflage, by its inordinate length, his torn boots. At night, one could sleep on it in the dunes

without waking up with a stiff neck. But first and foremost it fulfilled the role of a portable field- and café-library. Its ample and generous pockets seemed specially designed to carry books about. It had a pocket for bibliography, a pocket for History, pockets for Economics and Statistics, and so on.

The overcoat was stolen from B in a café where he did not even owe money yet. It was stolen while his mind fought one of its great battles against our hopeless and talentless editorial hacks, and particularly against that bastard breed, product of the mating of a nightwatchman with a pulp-writer, the sub-editor. After his first anger had passed, he explained to me with the gently sarcastic smile of a Palestinian Count Bobby<sup>1</sup>: 'It was a bad thing to happen just now, when the rains are going to start. But I am comforted by the thought that my precious overcoat will remain in the country and participate in the circulation of goods, that is, our national economy. Patriotism is a comfort, or is it not?'

One day he arrived at my flat, happy and beaming, and explained that he had just come back from Safed, where, roaming through the old cemetery, he had discovered the grave of a mediaeval mystic, a saintly Kabbalist, who had beyond any possible doubt been one of his direct forbears. This was a great day in his life—a dramatic compensation for the humiliating anonymity which the cattle-boat of illegal immigrants had forced upon its passengers. He had come on a little hell-ship straight from hell; but in this country the devil of anonymity had been exorcized by the spirit of his sacred ancestors. A dead leaf drifting in the foul wind of illegality had become attached to the genealogical tree—and judging by the age of the tree, every Jew is of course an aristocrat.

His aristocratic character became particularly evident on those red-letter days when some friend, remembering B's generosity in the Vienna days, made him a present of a new suit with a couple of Palestine pounds tucked discreetly into a sidepocket. If the event fell on a sabbath when the bookshops are closed, B betook himself straight to the Café Pilz, our Claridge's of those days, and within an hour had spent all the money. He ordered the most expensive dishes and the rarest vintage wines—once I saw him in front of a bottle of Cheval Blanc 1904. He invited any acquaintance who happened to be round at Pilz's; but by preference

<sup>1</sup> 'Graf Bobby', the slightly gaga Austrian aristocrat of the old school, was a favourite character of the Vienna of the twenties. (Translator.)

foreigners of rank or spirit. On these occasions he was particularly brilliant; a tactful host and accomplished causeur, he played the part of a cultural attaché of our country, much in the style of an Austrian diplomat at the Congress of Vienna. In fact, he called these most civilized of his escapades his 'diplomatic flirtations'. Nobody watching from another table could have suspected that this delightful man would have to pay for his hospitality with a fortnight on breadcrusts and water; even less that in the dizzy lightheadedness caused by chronic hunger he would, as an antidote, devour thousands of printed words. I must confess that secretly I approved of all this, despite the fact that I was his doctor, and that I knew he would have to pay for an hour as a 'cultural attaché of Judea' with a pound of his already shrunken flesh. It was his way of protesting against the provincialism of this country, our whole trite and tasteless pattern of life.

The symptoms of our patient, as I have described them so far, seem confused and lacking a common denominator. This was also my own impression until one day the central motif of his eccentricities dawned on me and the whole puzzle fell into a pattern. History, like nature—and being part of nature—has a horror of the void. A new society like ours is incomplete and bubbling with voids—like airholes which make you sea-sick on a flight. What, then, was the function of the crank B in our society—the para-psychological meaning of his symptoms as it were? They all served one common purpose: to abolish the white spots on our social map. From morning to night he was busy filling the various gaping voids in our society, rushing from one danger-spot to another like an ambulance car. He was responsible for all disasters and accidents. He was the Super Editor-in-Chief of all our newspapers, the Supreme Proof-Reader in Command, the Guardian of Maps and Names, the Cato of the Jews, the Talleyrand of Israel. He must always be what the rest of us refused or forgot to be.

Above all, he was the secret chief of the Jewish Secret Service—precisely because no such thing exists. Ordinary lunatics are always somebody who exists or has existed in the past—Napoleon or Christ or the Emperor of China. But we have no Jewish Cultural attachés and no Secret Service. For twenty-five years we were passive objects in a confused game—like a freight car loaded with perishable material, we were slowly shunted from one rail-track to another and finally pushed forward and back on a dead line.

Our leadership did not function or was not taken seriously; except when from time to time it was asked to pay the fee for the absurd journey and to utter three cheers at the lovely view from the window. We were trained like harmless and obedient beasts—something halfway between a tame elephant and a screeching parrot—by the Foreign Office and its various Intelligence Branches.

So my poor friend B had by force of circumstances no other choice but to become the secret head of the Jewish Counter-Intelligence. He accepted his new responsibilities without a murmur of complaint, and went to work with his usual enthusiasm. He had no collaborators—the top-secret nature of the work made it impossible to confide in anybody; his only help was a card-index system of amazing elaborateness. It was not confined to Palestine alone, but embraced the whole Colonial Empire, from Burma to Jamaica. All secret agents camouflaged as harmless missionaries, as hardy archaeologists, journalists and oil-prospectors, had their own cards. It was sufficient to mention a name like Parker-Woods to him and he would reel off all the Parker-Woods in the Colonial administration: the Parker-Woods of Mandalay, and the Parker-Woods of Cairo, the Punjab Parker and the Sudan Woods, including aunts and nieces. How had he gained access to the data of this occult science? The answer is simple. Sooner or later in his career every British Colonial servant publishes a book. Every one of them imagines he has in him something of Raleigh and something of Shelley and something of Gibbon and something of Cecil Rhodes; not to mention the dash of T. E. Lawrence. So their memoirs spread like a rash among the bookshelves. Nobody of course buys them any more than the works of our great philosopher Martin Buber. But when B started on his new job he bought them all—at the cost of forsaking hot meals for six months. Most of these books had been rotting for many years on the shelves and were in a dreadful state, moth- and worm-eaten, exhaling an odour of sour herrings. Yet these were the hieroglyphic clues to the secret of the British Empire, and the source of the card-index with its scholarly cross-references relating all Parker-Woods from Burma to Jamaica.

Both in life and literature we are only able to take an interest in a hero if he has a philosophy, however banal or even petty it may

be. There seem to be as many philosophies as there are vitamins, to keep people going. Even the cheapest detective story has a philosophy, served in an ultra-microscopic quantity—one cubic centimetre of Aristotelian dialectics diluted in gallons of turgid liquid. B would be a boring character had he been a man with an obsession but without a philosophy. In fact he had too much of it. The problem which dominated it was the question of our collective identity.

Every nation has a collective identity to which the individual owes a spiritual allegiance, which compels him to perform certain acts, to think in certain terms, to behave in a certain manner, to display certain virtues and faults. Yet however hard my patient tried, he could discover no forces in our social environment capable of imposing a definite pattern on his personality. How does the identity of a nation manifest itself? First, in a Constitution which it regards as sacred; in its jurisdiction, its moral and social order; in its literature and art; but most obviously in the architecture of its buildings, in its rules of courtesy, its costumes (particularly the men's headgear), in its way of preparing food, its humour and superstitions, its swear words and in the folk-lore of its police courts. I remember one particular outburst of B's:

'A nation of half a million people which knows no other invective than 'chamor' (donkey); and whose entire vocabulary for erotic and flirtatious purposes consists of the abstract statement 'I love you'—such a nation has no identity. Just look at the names of our streets! How can you talk of a nation with an identity in a town where Ferdinand Lassalle Street crosses Greengrocer's Lane, and Socrates Mews end in some Rabinowitch Avenue? Believe me, doctor, we have no identity, or none yet. We are not a solid body with sharp boundaries where every molecule has its defined place, but a gas of whirling atoms. We suffer from an excess of freedom for the particles and from the absence of a centre of gravity. We have no established frame of collective responsibility. Of course we are all Hebrews, we all speak Hebrew and worship our Prophets and Rabbis. But what sort of Hebrews are we, of which period in History? Weizmann thinks we live in the era of Ezra and Nehemiah, of the return from the Babylonian Exile; our socialists in the settlements think we are peasants of the time of the first Maccabean dynasty; Beigin thinks he is a reincarnation of Bar Kochba who led the revolt against the Romans. At what



precise moment did the clock of our History stop? At what period do we start ticking again? What is it that we have undertaken to continue? The traditions of Flavius Josephus who capitulated and made his peace with the Roman Procurators, or of Rabbi Akiba who was a philosopher and yet the leader of a hopeless rebellion against Rome? That is the question.'—I listened to my mad patient and I had to agree with him; for I am convinced that the identity of any existing nation can be established by the simple means of asking to which period of its past history it feels most intimately committed in the present.

As I write about my patient, the echo of some of his obscure pronouncements is still ringing in my ears:

'Nations are in the habit of making themselves younger by a kind of hair-do in front of the magic mirror of their history. The way they behave in front of the mirror determines their future fate. Stalin plays with the sceptre of Ivan the Terrible, Roosevelt blows his nose in the handkerchief of Tom Payne, Hitler treasures his Napoleonic lock. But as for ourselves, we talk against a dim mirror covered with drops of our condensed breath. Instead of some period coiffure it reflects our bald pates. We march like the inmates of a deaf-mute institution on their Sunday promenade, without walkie-talkies to connect us with our past and future. One day these people will drive me raving mad.'

They did.

He held that a nation without a personality, without a collective identity, is an *illegal nation*. Once I had grasped this curious idea of his I began to feel, in the streets, in the café, at political meetings, that I was living in the midst of a colony of spiritual nudists—dangerous nudists who did not realize the degree and causes of their nudity.

The manner in which B met his death was, as you know, dreadful. Seized by an attack of persecution mania he rushed naked into the street. Some young men gave chase, threw stones after him, bruised and scratched him and dragged him by his hair along the pavement. He died in hospital from the effects of the beating he had taken in the street and at the police station. It is strange that having talked for so long about our national nudism of the spirit, he should have perished in the streets of Tel Aviv covered with nothing but his starved, elderly body. It was an act of insane but perfectly symbolic protest.

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There was a second aspect to all this, about which I have been reluctant to talk. His death occurred in the period of mass-arrests according to pre-established lists: and there was a causal connexion between those arrests and his death.<sup>1</sup> Had the lists been established by the British themselves, the events would probably have had no effect on B. Or if at least it had been a case of common treason, committed for money or favours! But it was something different: it was treason based on principles, denunciation supported by ideology, sacred treachery committed in the name of self-restraint and self-negation. But self-negation instead of self-assertion is the death of any nation. Those lists once more effaced our identity; they were an act of spiritual nudism *par excellence*. They exploded like a grenade in the holy of holies of poor B's brain. Now the altar was defiled, the Temple smitten. He had been Editor, Minister, Attaché, Chief of the Secret Service—against this challenge from inside, this stab in the back, he felt for the first time helpless. And, rendered helpless, he fell.

He actually fell, six months before his death, out of a window. It was a first-floor window and he only broke his leg. But at the first-aid station to which he was carried, he refused to divulge his name and address, and implored everybody around him to prevent any mention of the accident in the papers. Somehow they found out that I was his doctor. When I arrived, he told me in an excited whisper: 'My name is no longer B, you understand? Things have come to a head. They came to fetch me. There were such a lot of them, you wouldn't believe it. On each street corner they had posted three to five men. They had arms and they had come to hand me over to the British. For at last they have understood that I was the main enemy of all this illegality, anonymity and impersonality. I had found them out and they had come for me—the people without an identity. Comedians and clowns. What a Comic Opera we have got ourselves into, doctor! Had I not jumped out of the window they would have got me—there were so many of them. And behind them, the British Police. My leg hurts, but for God's sake don't send me to a hospital—there they would find me and that would be the end . . .'

He became so excited that I had to give him an overdose of

<sup>1</sup> In 1944, following the assassination of Lord Moyne by members of the Hebrew underground movement, the official Zionist bodies handed a list of several hundred leading terrorists to the British police. (Translator.)

Pantopon; then we transferred him to the surgical ward. Early next morning the director of the hospital rang me up: could I come to see him at once? I thought poor B had died, or at least developed gangrene, and was moved by the considerateness of my colleagues. But when I arrived, the Director and the Head of the surgical ward were pacing up and down the mangy hospital garden with faces like thunder:

'Have you known this B for a long time? This is a very embarrassing matter. Can you guarantee for him?' And so on and so forth.

I asked them, out of sheer sadism: 'Since when is a doctor supposed to guarantee the civic virtues of his patient?'

They became more embarrassed and explicit: 'This B is a particularly dangerous individual. He has admitted that the Police are after him. He is on a special list—you know—I mean—you know what sort of list. All this is terribly awkward. You know that the District Police Station was blown up yesterday at 10 p.m. And your patient was admitted one hour later—allegedly having fallen out of a window . . .'

The end of it was, believe it or not, that I had to sign a guarantee of civic respectability for a patient with a broken tibia in the surgical ward. Events seemed to conspire to convince me how logical B's insanity was.

The end came rapidly. His leg healed and he was transferred into the observation ward of a mental asylum. After a couple of months he was discharged, limping but apparently cured. And now his Viennese humour played a last, very subtle prank. B became, as it were, hyper-normal!

Only a few weeks before he had told me fantastic stories of how the C.I.D. had come to fetch him at night from the ward; they had tortured him and had tattooed with red-hot needles the initials 'E.P.—F.F.' on his chest. These letters stood for 'Enemy of the Present, Friend of the Future.'

But since he was discharged, no more of this nonsense for him. He fell into the opposite extreme. He behaved as if he had entirely reconciled himself to our sweet, anarchic, provincial way of life. He did not permit himself a single word of the mildest criticism. He found everything wonderful in this best of all possible little worlds and his tirades now became verbal orgies of conformism. Our newspapers were the best in the world, our radio programmes

subtle and witty, our public opinion upright and sincere. He praised the far-sightedness of our leaders, their mutual trust and absence of jealousy. Our architecture was lovely, our youth heroic, our public bodies soaked in the spirit of responsibility and virtue. In short, he was eating his words at the rate of several gallons per day. His fear had become so overwhelming that his mind had to go underground—where it celebrated orgies of sanity. But a mind which has gone underground, even if only to join the maquis of normality, is more deadly to its owner than atomic radiations.

Once I made an incautious remark. From then onward he avoided me, too. I knew too much about him; I, too, could become a menace. I could do no more for him. I learnt about his end partly from the papers, partly from the files at the police station. Charitable friends had put an empty basement at his disposal. One early morning he emerged naked from this basement, was chased, beaten, and died a few days later in hospital.

I wonder what it was that made his pursuers so angry. Of course he did hit back, scratch and bite them—according to one eyewitness he called them traitors and thieves who were stealing their own future. But that, after all, is no reason for lynching a naked, elderly philosopher. Did the Greeks beat their Diogenes? Would they have lynched him had he left his barrel to take a stroll in the nude through the markets of his native town, Sinope? I can't believe it. What a long way we have to go until we catch up with the Greeks of Alexander's day.

[*Translated by* ARTHUR KOESTLER]

MICHEL LEIRIS  
CONTEMPORARY  
SCULPTORS

VIII—THOUGHTS AROUND  
ALBERTO GIACOMETTI

To write of Alberto Giacometti as he himself has done of Henri Laurens: by allusion, analogy, by evoking images which have no obvious connexion with the characteristic to be defined—not theoretically or descriptively.

In 1933, shortly after returning from my first visit to darkest Africa (a visit which Giacometti held against me, as he said subsequently, because it was made under official auspices) I spent the summer in Brittany, in that region where menhirs, dolmens and cromlechs abound. There I had a series of dreams, parts of which I here set down chronologically:

—On the ground floor, or in the basement of a sort of museum. There is a gymnasium in which children are playing tricks. They have a construction reminiscent of the classic side-show of any fair or amusement park, known as 'The Ghost Train'. This one is called 'The Wedding', perhaps it is a variation on Aunt Sally. I get in by opening a door which is like a stage property. Inside there are lots of armchairs with seats that can be raised or lowered like *strapontins* in a theatre. In the distance, obliquely, I see a little theatre which is about the size of a toy and looks somewhat like one of those ornate organs covered with figures which are as a rule the central feature of any roundabout. Realizing that the laws of the game demand that I be whisked between all these chairs, without any personal control over my course or speed, and that if I touch any of them I shall certainly get an electric shock if not some even less agreeable surprise, I am gripped with fear and slip away, leaving the friend who is with me.

—Half awake one morning, a dream from which I had just woken (immediately or not?) turns into a rectangle of the colour of red ink. Its shape is clearly defined on a sheet of paper.

This rectangle, which is perhaps actually cut out of the paper (ultimately I am not sure whether it is a sheet of stiff or semi-stiff board or just paper) is at the same time a proscenium (of the Elizabethan type) and a beard. Outside this rectangle the reflection of an 'old friend' appears, in the form of a bearded figure whom I subsequently recognise as the Italian consul from Gondar, a town where I stayed in Abyssinia. Then, at the very moment when, waking from my reverie, I go to note down this reflection (which had seemed to intervene like a sort of commentary or moral to my whole dream) I suddenly forget it. And despite considerable effort I cannot piece any more of it together than this: a brief proposition, consisting of two alternatives and most probably ending with the words, 'you must . . . ose or . . . pose'. All that I can remember about the second of the two infinitives is that it was something like 'oppose', 'dispose' or 'impose'.

—I am coming away from a reception keeping myself upright by leaning on a stick which does not belong to me. The handle is straight not bent in a crook. It is of very rough wood polished by use. Among the guests I see a woman who is the wife of an Italian diplomat. I go to a sort of garage, the floor of which is wet with rain, in order to perform a natural function. This I do facing a rather small garden which serves as a sculptor's studio. There are some bits (identifiable details or fragments?) of mediaeval or renaissance sculpture lying on a bench in the open air. The garden, which I can only just see, divides the garage from a house whose windows are open and in which the sculptor lives.

—Half awake, I try to recollect a distich which had the air of being a formula which contained the essence of some revelation. I think I have got it sufficiently clear not to lose it, so I sit up in bed and reach for some paper on which to write it down. All that is necessary is for the point of the pen or pencil to move over the white surface of the paper, but nothing happens and I have to recognize that I have forgotten it. Possibly the second verse contained a reference to 'roses' and 'fire'.

Giacometti's Italian-Swiss origin. His professional familiarity with minerals explains perhaps his look of being hewn out of rock. No heaviness, however, nothing ursine. A certain sobriety of gesture. Does this conceal his affinity with those lean animals (ibex or chamois) which prefer to live on very steep slopes?



A crown of frizzed hair, a not too mobile face and a cannibal laugh which often discloses a large array of teeth. A character from a *commedia dell'arte* dating back perhaps to the Etruscans, part medicine-man Harlequin, part child-eating Punchinello, and, if the animal comparison is to be insisted upon, even part were-wolf (itself, indeed, subject to the strangest transformations). Remember that a sociologist has attributed the origin of the fork to cannibals, people of greater refinement than is generally thought.

Giacometti's art in so far as it calls in question the spectator himself through actual works: a girl with knees half-bent as though offering something to anyone who looks at her (a pose suggested to the sculptor by a girl he once saw in his native land); a figure pointing a finger to indicate to a third imaginary person something which can only form part of the spectator's own world; objects presented in the form of experimental arrangements or of small-scale models of side-shows at a fair; etc. . . . Above all, a standing woman, her arms hanging down, motionless like a question-mark.

Rectangular panels standing vertically and arranged in a circle: a product of Giacometti's imagination realized on paper, this construction was to signify a set of events which (for the most part) happened to him during recent years and which were hung together on the single thread of a dream which he wanted to remember. Each panel corresponded to one of the facts described and the whole construction expressed the relationships of time and place. This arrangement brings to mind one of the objects made by Giacometti in the days when he was a member of the Surrealist group: a sculpture in plaster, a sort of model of a side-show, the successive elements of which would provide the adventure of any spectator who happened to be projected into it.

To set up votive stones, to materialize experiences, to give a lasting consistency to whatever is fugitive or impossible to grasp in any happening, to fix realities by borrowing, if necessary, from naturalism only what is indispensable to carry conviction but no more: broadly speaking, these seem to be Giacometti's aims and he has apparently chosen a three-dimensional form of self-expression because this is the most difficult form of art to handle without cheating.

One of Giacometti's chief pre-occupations: the scale on which human beings are represented in a work of art. What strikes him about the engravings of Jacques Callot, for example, is the smallness of the figures, which are lost in a vast space as though seen from a certain height.

Giacometti's statues are larger in the yard of his studio or in the street than in the studio (cluttered up with bits of plaster which as yet have not penetrated to the small room in which, for a long time, come rain come cold, he used to sleep). This difference due to the fact that a living being always expands when he is no longer confined. Or, more rationally, because the human scale can only be judged in the open air.

Until now, only astronomers have really troubled about the *apparent* and *real* diameters in the objects of their vision. Giacometti shows that he knows how to make this sort of distinction when he fashions figures whose 'natural size' is not dependent on their measurable height.

People standing, people walking, figures crossing or meeting in a place which may be public or private, a single arm, a nose thrusting itself forward as though some enormous face were indiscreetly intervening; these are some of the ways for sculpture to make itself felt according to the different protocols of Giacometti's conception. He works in the large atmospheric box which we inhabit, whose space is so different from that of the museums.

What one sees walking along a pavement when things strike one at eye-level. What one only sees at a distance from a window.

Whereas a sculpture is generally an object surrounded by space (as opposed to a cannon or a hole surrounded by bronze) Giacometti is today concerned with creating a space containing one or more objects.

Reasons for thinking that Giacometti has a byzantine subtlety: the ceaseless attention he gives to very simple problems (but for this reason more difficult than many to define, even if one only

weighs words), problems posed by the way in which people and things are presented to us.

To limit oneself to what is peculiar to man: to stand, to walk by moving one leg after the other.

As a result of an accident which left him with one foot seriously injured, Giacometti could only walk with the aid of a stick for several years. Then, one day he decided to get rid of his stick, and no sooner had he taken this decision than he began to move without it. In the same way his sculptures stand up without either sticks or crutches.

After the well-polished solid forms with which he began (steles or water-worn pebbles, all that remains of the perception of a living thing), after the open-work constructions and the play-things which refuse to be blocks in space, have come figurines no bigger than pins and others slightly larger but still very thin, images of the vertical stance, the human form at its material minimum as growths around a plumb-line.

These elongated effigies were once painted, for the most part spattered with rust-coloured blobs, as though the necessity for giving blood to them had called this clayey colour to their surface.

Are they statues which have returned to the natural state as a result of some accident or according to a custom as yet undefined? Or just natural bodies elevated to the rank of statues by means of slight alterations or a period of ripening?

Giacometti's last sculptures have a look of 'found objects'. Inclination to believe, after all, that they are idols or mummies which have emerged from a bed of parched sand or from a volcanic formation. Comparisons: the desert formation called *rose des sables*; certain physical changes caused by erosion; certain utensils deformed by becoming embedded in molten lava or directly eaten into by a consuming vapour.

Extreme reduction of matter following an economic law which seems to determine both the quality and the quantity of the attack thereon. Only a very little, in fact the barest minimum

of necessary matter, deprived of its own accord of any lustre, as though to demonstrate that richness is to be found elsewhere.

Cut away down to the bone, to the indestructible. Or, inversely, add space where the apparent desire is to eliminate yet another few grains of matter.

Between the geological and the aerial a party wall-surface.

Something of the ruins of Pompeii and of wall-paintings which have retained their freshness despite winds, storms and ashes. The kind of discoveries made by archaeologists are a point at which thousands of years of antiquity converge with an abrupt interruption of time: the sudden uncovering of a figure in which the whole of a long past is for ever summed up. As for his own discoveries, Giacometti it seems (giving orders to his hands as to a team of excavators) would pull them out of his brain complete in every detail.

Accent on speed, without which creation could not happen. Instead of the patiently elaborated work of art we now have something which rises up suddenly and which is all the more evident for looking as though it had suddenly arrived, without either roots or history: instantaneous and outside time. Given this view it is better to destroy completely than to try and correct. Watching the sort of mass sacrifices in which Giacometti indulges I have sometimes wondered whether sculpture is not for him simply a way of making something which can at once be destroyed.

Problem of the *real presence* posed and resolved by Giacometti whereas it seems to have escaped practically all our other sculptors, who are purely architects or manufacturers of mannequins which are never present despite the fact of being stuffed. Similarly, the negro sculptor thinks less of representing a given model than of making its presence possible (even if he does later allow his figure to tumble into dust).

'*Rose tremière*', '*sainte de l'abîme*', '*fantômes blancs*' fallen from '*notre ciel qui brûle*': a sequence of images from one of the most

famous *Chimères* by him who posterity, like his friends, may simply know as 'Gérard'. I am tempted to apply this same sequence to the succession of female figures sculpted in recent years by 'Alberto', although his origins are not in the Île-de-France but in a land of fierce cold abounding in mountains and snow.

[Translated by DOUGLAS COOPER]

GEOFFREY WAGNER

## CENTENNIAL OF A SUICIDE: THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

It is a hundred years since Beddoes killed himself. Yet, as Horace Gregory has remarked:

the death which looks gigantically down on the remains of Beddoes, Edgar Poe and Hart Crane, has its reality in a social order that resumed its reckless course after the Napoleonic wars and is now emerging as the threat of world disaster in the terrible guise of Fascism.<sup>1</sup>

Beddoes's suicide, however, was not the *junger Werther* death of a Kleist (to which he referred in his correspondence<sup>2</sup>), nor is it entirely that 'grimace of cynicism and disillusion'<sup>3</sup> which Dr. Niebuhr tells us underlies all modern life. 'In ages when values crumble and survival has an ever so slight but still perceptible touch of glibness and betrayal, artists are often tempted by suicide, but rarely commit it,'<sup>4</sup> writes Arthur Koestler, and we are reminded of Kit Smart's fear, which he never implemented, that Keats often 'intended' to kill himself, according to Severn and Dr. Clark, and that Schumann, so Wasilewski tells us, longed to commit suicide also. Indeed Dr. Calvin Schmid's researches in Seattle, Washington, which has the highest mean rate of suicide

<sup>1</sup> Horace Gregory, 'Poet Resurrected', *New Republic*, 29 July 1936, 87, 357-8.

<sup>2</sup> Letter XXXII. 19 July 1830: I have adhered throughout to Gosse's numbering of the letters.

<sup>3</sup> *The Concept of Dread*.

<sup>4</sup> *The Yogi and the Commissar*.

of any town in the U.S.A. (with an incidence of 43.7 per 100,000 of the population of twenty-one years of age and over), reveal that here students have the lowest 'occupational' rate of suicide (8.1) and unskilled manual labourers the highest (277.0). Though this is perhaps a back-handed comment on the direct results of the economy of a country where 22,000 people kill themselves each year (and 100,000 more make efforts of one sort or another and 'fail'), yet Beddoes is more than a mere symptom. Developing his peculiar poetic talents very young, he represents as complete a denial of aesthetic values as we know in literature outside Rimbaud. He published his first poem in *The Morning Post* when he was only sixteen, wrote *The Improvisatore* and *The Bride's Tragedy* as an undergraduate, but after this, despite lavish praise from critics who likened his early brilliance to Keats's,<sup>1</sup> he never published another original work in English for the rest of his life.<sup>2</sup>

But Beddoes's cynicism, his retreat to humour when unable to implement his vision (like Shaw), was really inverted idealism. If he was 'the last Elizabethan'<sup>3</sup> he was also the first of the moderns. For he never faded from a brilliant start. By continuing to write in private in a style which alone, by its obsolescence, showed how little he was satisfied by prevailing art standards, Beddoes evinced an heroic irony, a cynicism that was of epic proportions. But by the highest standards his genius was repressed by being expressed almost entirely in terms of revenge. His whole satire is a form of retaliation against a society he so despised. It was a twisted talent, yearning for consummation in the wider social body, retreating frustrated to humour and gall.

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Beddoes believed 'that all autobiographical sketches are the result of mere vanity—not excepting those of St. Augustin and Rousseau'<sup>4</sup> and we would indeed know as little about him as we

<sup>1</sup> *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, December 1823; *The Gentleman's Magazine*, October 1823, XCIII, 2, p. 348; John Lacy (pseudonym for George Darley), 'Letters to the Dramatists of the Day', *The London Magazine*, October 1823.

<sup>2</sup> He may have been the author—'B'—of some poems and articles in the *Volksbote* and *Bayerisches Volksblatt*, c. 1830-40, but these are mostly political and differ in style and quality from the main bulk of his work.

<sup>3</sup> Lytton Strachey, *Books and Characters*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1922, p. 237.

<sup>4</sup> Letter XLII, 15 May 1837.



do of his beloved Webster or Massinger, had it not been for the devotion of Kelsall.

The popular critical trend is to dub Beddoes an 'eccentric',<sup>1</sup> but it is surely his father who deserves this epithet more—that earnest doctor whom Coleridge mentions with such affection in his *Letters* and the unfinished *Hints Towards the Formation of a More Comprehensive Theory of Life*, a physician who once ordered some patients to sleep in his cowshed because he trusted the animal heat of the cows more than any new-fangled man-made heating system.<sup>2</sup> Or perhaps Beddoes's maternal grandfather, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, of whom Virginia Woolf has written so delightfully, was the most 'eccentric' of them all—Edgeworth the inventor who tried to deflect the course of the Rhône, and when that failed, experimented with a carriage to put down its own road surface as it went along. Later, presiding over a household containing twenty-two children of his four marriages, not counting sisters and grandchildren (of whom Thomas Lovell was one), Edgeworth invented a variant of the bicycle, the driver walking inside a barrel and thus causing an outer, geared cylinder to rotate at speed; this contraption came to grief in a chalkpit, the 'pedestrian' inside escaping just in time.<sup>3</sup>

For Beddoes's mother was the sister of Maria Edgeworth, whose *Life and Letters* give us useful information on the young poet who was born at Rodney Place, Clifton, on 20 July 1803, in the same year as Emerson. Beddoes was left fatherless at five and used to be taken, with his brother and sister, for holidays to the Edgeworths in Ireland, where Maria read to him.<sup>4</sup> Of this household it was Emmeline Edgeworth who married the Clifton Dr. King and whose daughter, Zoë King, proved such a friend to the poet, not only in his life but after his death. Beddoes attended Bath Grammar School and then entered Charterhouse on 5 June 1807, where

<sup>1</sup> cp. Royall Snow, *Thomas Lovell Beddoes: Eccentric and Poet*, New York: Covici-Friede, 1928.

<sup>2</sup> John Edmonds Stock, *Memoirs of the Life of Thomas Beddoes, M.D.*; Atkinson's *Medical Bibliography* is interesting on Beddoes Senior as is, of course, Sir Humphrey Davy in his *Memoirs* (Bristol, 1802).

<sup>3</sup> The Hon. Emily Lawless, *Maria Edgeworth* (Ch. II), and *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth* (London, 1820).

<sup>4</sup> *Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth*, Vol. I, p. 158.

Charles Dacre Bevan had the misfortune to be his fag.<sup>1</sup> Beddoes won prizes for Latin and Greek as well as a reputation for rebellion against authority. At the age of fifteen he wrote *Scaroni*, 'a belated specimen of the Maturin and Mrs. Radcliffe School of Terror' Gosse calls it, and then the poem *The Comet*, which was taken by *The Morning Post*. In May 1820 he went up to Pembroke, Oxford, his father's college, where he pursued 'a course of studied impertinence',<sup>2</sup> being dubbed by the dons a 'red radical'<sup>3</sup> and once appearing at a tutorial with a large butcher's knife in order to cut the pages of a dusty volume he had failed to read. In early 1821 he brought out *The Improvisatore* and had by the next year completed and found a publisher for *The Bride's Tragedy*. This work established Beddoes in contemporary letters and it is likely that he started work at once on *The Last Man*, *Love's Arrow Poisoned* and *Torrismond*, as well as many minor lyrics. It was now that Beddoes made the two closest friendships of his life and began the correspondence which gives a unique and vivid picture of his character. At Oxford he met Bryan Waller Procter, author of *The Flood of Thessaly* and *Dramatic Scenes*, and later made a Metropolitan commissioner of lunacy or, as Beddoes himself put it,

appointed to a high office in the government of the kingdom of y<sup>e</sup> moon, upon which, as a retired member of the company of poets, he was, I suppose, accustomed to draw liberally.

In the summer of 1823 he went to cram with a solicitor at Southampton. This was Thomas Forbes Kelsall who preserved Beddoes's manuscripts carefully and published them despite the indifference, and even antagonism, of Beddoes's own family.<sup>4</sup> The fate of the Beddoes manuscripts, their passage to Robert Browning who kept them superstitiously without looking at them for ten

<sup>1</sup> Bevan's description of the Carthusian Beddoes is appended to Kelsall's *Memoir* in the first collected edition.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Bevan to Revell Phillips, 26 July 1851.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Maclean, *A History of Pembroke College, Oxford*, Oxford Historical Society.

<sup>4</sup> When Gosse wrote to one of the family for information, he was advised to destroy everything of Beddoes's that existed. Mrs. Andrew Crosse, who later met Beddoes's sister, believed 'that had the MSS. (*Death's Jest-Book*) come into their possession, they would most probably have been consigned to the fire'. (*Temple Bar*, March 1894, Vol. 101, p. 358).

years, and their eventual disintegration along with 'Pen' Browning's household at Asolo, is somehow typical of the fragmentary nature of Beddoes's genius, for he would jot down his momentary inspirations on odd, incomprehensibly crowded scraps of paper, the *Early Dramatic Fragment No. X* being written lengthways in the margin of *Alfarabi*.<sup>1</sup> Beddoes had now written *Torrismond* and *The Second Brother*, and was angling for a publisher for a collection of lyrics to be called *Outidana* when his mother died in Italy. He was staying with the Kings at Clifton at this time (1824) and he did not leave Zoë until the last possible moment, arriving in Florence after his mother had died. On returning to England he settled to the life of a leading young intellectual. In his rooms in Devereux Court he met Hogg, Godwin, Peacock and Darley, reminded Mary Shelley of her husband and others of Keats,<sup>2</sup> though Branwhite's portrait, painted at this time, hardly bears out either resemblance. It was now, aged twenty-two, at the beginning of a brilliant career perhaps, lionized by the intelligentia, that Beddoes made his break. Recognition does not in fact seem to have made him happy: 'I have lived in a deserted state which I could hardly bear much longer', he wrote to Kelsall, 'without sinking into that despondency on the brink of which I have sate so long'.<sup>3</sup> In mid-July 1825, just after he had written his sympathetic *Introduction* to what he had translated of Schiller's *Philosophic Letters*, he left for Germany where he went at once to Göttingen and matriculated at the University there on the 27th. Except for short visits to England he lived in Germany and Switzerland for the rest of his life, primarily occupied with science. It was a deliberate turn to rational knowledge. He had translated one passage from Schiller as follows:

My reason is now my all; my only security for divinity, virtue, immortality . . . Reason is a torch in a dungeon. Raphael, I demand my soul from you. I am not happy.

His letters to Kelsall become filled with scorn of poetry, denying himself any poetical call,<sup>4</sup> confessing that

Shakespeare, Dante, Milton, all who have come next to the human heart, had found no object in life to satiate the restless

<sup>1</sup> H. W. Donner, *Thomas Lovell Beddoes;—The Making of a Poet*, Oxford University Press, 1935, and H. W. Donner, *The Browning Box*, Oxford, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Letter IV, 29 March 1824; later Mrs. Procter told Gosse the same thing.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Letters XVIII, XIX, XXII, XXVII and XXX.

yearnings of their hearts and appease at the same time the fastidious cravings of their imaginations. Dissatisfaction is the lot of the poet.<sup>1</sup>

Beddoes was not going to be caught the same way. By analogy, dissatisfaction became not only the lot but the impetus of the poet, and the neurotic man, as Nerval believed, became the supremely civilized man, the man of vision. Beddoes's firm sanity would not permit him this view. He kept up his sneer of aesthetic abjuration until, on his death-bed, he wrote 'I ought to have been amongst other things a good poet'.<sup>2</sup>

For a while Beddoes thought he was happy. Seated on his horse-hair sofa, looking across the Elbe with his meerschaum at his side, 'full of Grave and abundantly prosaic'<sup>3</sup> he believed he had found intellectual serenity. From now until 1829 he lived, with breaks for his vacations, at Göttingen studying anatomy under Blumenbach. But his new life did not satisfy him. He discovered that matter is as inscrutable as mind and his letters from 1827 on become heavier, profounder, more unhappy. He began to translate 'the old obscure tedious Nibelungenlied'<sup>4</sup> and had begun what is undoubtedly his masterpiece, *Death's Jest-Book*. In March-April of 1828 he paid a brief visit to England to take his M.A., Zoë King claiming his attentions almost exclusively; it was now he wrote in her album the famous autobiographical lines,

Woe again to me!

For now I hear even such an anxious voice  
Crying in my soul's solitude, and bewailing  
That I had never in my childhood known  
The bud of this manifold beauteousness . . .

I might have stood, tho' last, among the friends  
Where I am now the last among the strangers,  
And have not passed away, as now I must,  
Into forgetfulness, into the cold  
Of the open, homeless world without a hope,  
Unless it be of pardon for these words. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Letter XXVII, 21 October 1827.

<sup>2</sup> Letter LII, 26 January 1849.

<sup>3</sup> Letter XVII, 19 July 1825.

<sup>4</sup> Letter XIV (postmark) 25 March 1825.

A year later he was to make his first attempt at suicide. Inexplicably, now, Beddoes raced back from 'this dull idle pampered isle'<sup>1</sup> but the same year was back on another short stay, possibly to see about his mother's estates in Shropshire off which he was now living. But though himself an absentee landlord in this way, Beddoes loathed capitalism, which he equated especially with England, probably writing the bitter article 'Zur Zeitgeschichte. England.' in the *Bayerisches Volksblatt*<sup>2</sup> and, in 'Lines Written in Switzerland', his most splenetic attack:

Be proud of Manchester,  
Pestiferous Liverpool, Ocean-Avernus,  
Where bullying blasphemy, like a slimy lie,  
Creeps to the highest church's pinnacle,  
And glistening infects the light of heaven.  
O flattering likeness on a copper coin!  
Sit still upon your slave-raised cotton ball,  
With upright toasting fork and toothless cat:  
The country clown still holds her for a lion.

His 'national anthem', as he called it, went,

Drink, Britannia, Britannia drink your Tea,  
For Britons, bores and buttered Toast; they  
all begins with B.

It is all the more touching when we come across the one sudden piece of home-sickness for his 'deuced dear Island'.<sup>3</sup>

Back in Germany now, Beddoes was indeed actively supporting the German proletariat, the oppressed citizens of Cassel and attacking 'the infamy of the Polish transaction'. He personally entertained many of the leading Polish exiles and was probably writing on their behalf in the *Volksblatt*. On 24 March 1832 he spoke at a banquet in honour of Poland and was arrested after addressing a revolutionary meeting at Gaibach on 27 May. A deportation order was made out for him on 10 July and on the 21st he left for Strasbourg, and later Zürich where he lived until 1840, an exiled exile.

<sup>1</sup> Letter XXVIII, 8 April 1828.

<sup>2</sup> 17 January 1832, No. 7, pp. 62-4.

<sup>3</sup> Letter XXXIII, 10 January 1831.

Here he made friends with Johann Schoenlein, whom he rated as great as Boerhaave and Cullen,<sup>1</sup> and with whom he visited England in 1835. It was on his return from this visit that Schoenlein put his name up for a Professorship at the University there, but Beddoes typically refused to comply with the regulation of having to publish and instead lived happily for a time in the town practising as a doctor (he had taken his M.D. on 10 September 1831, but refused to make use of the title<sup>2</sup>) and working on *Death's Jest-Book* about which he was always incorrigibly cynical—it was 'perfectly adapted to remain unread'.<sup>3</sup> But in the Zürich revolt of 1839 Beddoes's friend in the liberal canton administration, Johann Hegetschweiler, was shot in cold blood. Beddoes left Zürich on 9 April 1840, as did also, at this time, the young Gottfried Keller, studying to be a painter, and whom Beddoes joined temporarily in Aargau. He paid another flying visit to London, then returned to Berlin where he first met Dr. Frey whose letters concerning the suicide are so interesting, and from now until 1846 he spent his time mostly between Basle, Zürich, and Baden. In August 1846 he travelled to London for the last time. It is this visit that has always been made so much of in connexion with Beddoes's 'eccentricity'. He was drinking heavily, talked continually of skulls and dead men's bones, shut himself up for weeks on end in his bedroom, visited the Beddoeses of Cheney Longville riding on a donkey, and tried to set fire to Drury Lane Theatre with a five pound note. Was he mad?<sup>4</sup> Kelsall does not seem to have thought so when he met him between 6 and 8 June only, writing, however, that 'He professed an entire alienation from poetry, particularly his own, to which he would not bear an allusion'.<sup>5</sup>

Beddoes returned to Frankfurt at the end of July 1847 and lived there with a nineteen-year-old baker called Degen, 'a nice-looking young man dressed in a blue blouse,'<sup>6</sup> so Zoë King timidly described him later. Beddoes lived with Degen for about six months, taught him English and acting, and during this time he cut himself while

<sup>1</sup> Letter XXXVII, 27 February 1834 (Fragmentary).

<sup>2</sup> Letter XXXV, 25 September 1832.

<sup>3</sup> Letter XLII, 25 May 1837.

<sup>4</sup> cp. the writer in *The Athenaeum*, 27 December 1890.

<sup>5</sup> *Memoir*.

<sup>6</sup> Gosse, *Introduction*, p. xxx (not, as Snow footnotes it, p. xxxii).



dissecting a corpse, with the result that he contracted a serious virus infection which laid him up most of the winter. He would give no account of this accident to his friends,<sup>1</sup> saw only Degen, and when he recovered they set out together for Zürich. Here they evidently quarrelled. Degen returned to Frankfurt and Beddoes left for Basle, where 'in a condition of dejected apathy which was pitiful to witness'<sup>2</sup> he took a room in the Cicogne Hotel. 'Il était misérable,' a waiter there later told Zoë King, 'il a voulu se tuer.' The morning after he arrived, Beddoes slit an artery in his left thigh with a razor. He was admitted to the city hospital that day and there attended by Drs. Frey and Ecklin over an illness lasting some months. From the first, Gosse claims, Beddoes was 'grimly determined not to recover'<sup>3</sup> and 'stealthily tore off his bandages'<sup>4</sup> in order to induce gangrene which did, indeed, set in, making it necessary to amputate his leg, an operation Beddoes disguised in a letter to his sister (?) in October.<sup>5</sup> Finally, seeing that he was recovering despite his efforts, Beddoes got leave to hobble out of the hospital on 26 January and, using his authority as a physician, procured some poison (the identity of which is still disputed). At 9.30 that evening Dr. Ecklin found him dead, lying on his back in bed, with a note pinned to his shirt.

This account of Beddoes's end has been challenged by Royall Snow,<sup>6</sup> an American scholar, and still remains an academician's stamping-ground, for the hospital records show Beddoes 'gestorben an Apoplexie'. But it is now almost certain that the hospital authorities, guilty of lax surveillance of an attempted suicide patient, concealed the true facts.<sup>7</sup>

Beddoes died, as he lived, in a paroxysm of mockery. The last words he wrote in the death-note were: 'Buy for Dr. Ecklin above mentioned, one of Reade's best stomach-pumps'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Zoë King to Kelsall, 29 August 1858, describing her visit to Basle.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Introduction.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Letter L, 9 October 1848.

<sup>6</sup> Snow, *op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Donner, *The Browning Box.*

<sup>8</sup> Letter LII, 26 January 1849.

To understand Beddoes fully it is, of course, necessary to study his critical references in Letters II, III, XIV, XVIII, XXIII, XXV, XLVI and LI, but there is only space here to mention his love of the Elizabethans, his contempt for Goethe ('Their follies about his sitting between Shakespeare and Sophocles are laughed at everywhere but in the university')<sup>1</sup>, his great admiration for Tieck and Oehlenschläger, and his interest in the German translations of the social past—Voss's *Homer*, Griess's *Calderon*, Regiss's *Bojardo*, Droysen's *Aeschylus* and so on.<sup>2</sup> Beddoes was seeking the comprehensive talent; 'Apollo defend us', he wrote in a letter, 'from brewing all our lives at a quintessential pot of the smallest ale Parnassian,'<sup>3</sup> he had but 'a sort of very moderate somewhat contemptuous respect for the profession of a mere poet in our inky age'.<sup>4</sup> It was this lack of the comprehensive vision that sickened Beddoes to his medical researches and laboratory bench at Göttingen, and though he always scoffed at himself ('I would not give a shilling for anything I have written, nor sixpence for anything I am likely to write')<sup>5</sup>, yet he deliberately erected in his plays a fantastic society, beyond bourgeois conventions and customs, an unbridled phantasmagoria which acted for him as did orientals for Flaubert and Gautier. It was in this world, where bourgeois *mores* did not operate, and where the poet's potentialities could be fully liberated, in subject-matter as in language (for Beddoes believed that the whole of word history should be incarnate in the poet and never shirked archaisms), that we find Beddoes's idealism. For he deliberately attempted to defeat death, creating a fantastic world where humour was equivalent to reason.

*The Bride's Tragedy* is based on a Richardsonesque Oxford legend of the seduction of a college servant's daughter by a profligate undergraduate. It shows early that blending of the sensuous and loathly which was innate in Beddoes's attitude to death, a page out of the Gothic 'romantic agony' which he used so well. The plot, like all of Beddoes's plots, is vague. The characters, judged by the modern fashion of highly specialized characterization, are tenuous and unreal. But they are so on purpose. To say, with Gosse, that

<sup>1</sup> Letter XVIII, 29 September 1825.

<sup>2</sup> Letter LI, 8 November 1848.

<sup>3</sup> Letter XXXII, 19 July 1830.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Letter XXVII, 21 October 1827.

Beddoes 'lacked the power to construct a plot and to develop a character'<sup>1</sup> is to forget Isbrand and indeed to miss the point. Beddoes's characters are, as Richard Church has suggested,<sup>2</sup> Flaxmanesque figures of supreme emotion, pity, fear, madness. The hazy, dream-like quality of the characterization was an attempt to synthesize character and plot, for Beddoes sought to avoid the modern tendency to create character at the expense of all other aspects of the art-form, just as he avoided modern diction, debauched as it is of emotional associations and impingements, and went back to the Elizabethans whose vocabulary he found, like Hart Crane (who also used archaisms lavishly), to be the richest.<sup>3</sup> Beddoes's characters have the essential unity of dream characters. Slight, equal, unreal, they yet meet in the dreamer, are emanations of the central idea, and are all equally possessed of it.

This early play is a guilty work. The theme would appear to be the almighty power of love, but as in the Gothic novel the persuasion exercised is just the contrary. The body is the tomb of the flesh and man only lives when he is free of it: we are all, as Chekhov wrote in his *Notebooks*, guilty by the fact that we are alive. So Hesperus, wooing Olivia, tells her that she will not be truly his until they are both dead:

Though madness rule our thoughts, despair our hearts,  
And misery live with us, and misery talk,  
Our guest all day, our bed-fellow all night;  
No matter, all no matter.  
For when our souls are born then will we wed;<sup>4</sup>

Our souls are born when our bodies die. Death is the gateway out of a false, inhibiting existence into the *real*, supernatural 'world o' the dead'.<sup>5</sup> If these should be thought strange terms in which to court a lady, it must be remembered that Hesperus is often

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction*.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Church, 'Beddoes: The Last of the Alchemists', *The Spectator*, 9 February 1929, No. 142, pp. 188-9.

<sup>3</sup> In a letter to Gorham Munson, Crane wrote: 'To get . . . men like Strauss, Ravel, Scriabin, and Bloch into *words* one needs to *ransack* the vocabularies of Shakespeare, Jonson, Webster (for theirs were the richest) and add one scientific, street and counter, and psychological terms, etc.'

<sup>4</sup> *The Bride's Tragedy*, Act II, sc. iii.

<sup>5</sup> *Death's Jest-Book*, Act V, sc. iv, l. 357.

Beddoes talking to himself and when Hesperus addresses his own shadow in the dark, tapestried chamber, after having been, as he thinks, deceived by Floribel, he speaks in words that set the whole tenor of Beddoes's life:

I know thee now,  
I know the hideous laughter of thy face;

But it is in *Death's Jest-Book* the Beddoesian leitmotif reaches culmination. Here, then, in a world where skeletons arise and dance gavottes, where dead bones mimic life and a lover dies in agony to the tune of his lady's bridal serenade, we have an unashamed retreat to a completely surreal world, utterly divorced from the economic inhibitions of actual life. The whole work is dominated by Beddoes's finest creation, the court jester Isbrand. He represents the rational man in the play. He is not (as some have seen him) a simple misanthrope, nor is he the stylized buffoon-tragedian, smiling through his tears, like Rigoletto or Canio. Acutely conscious like Beddoes, he wanders through the horror of another dimension, through a world of Elizabethan charnel-houses, a fantasy of Poe or Dürer. He hears the songs that might have been sung by the witches in *Macbeth* and the creatures he meets are the exigencies of this background, mere morality play puppets which put him, Isbrand, in clearer relief. For this play, based as it is on Silesian pseudo-history, Beddoes created his own literature. Episodes were borrowed from Beaumont and Fletcher, Tourneur, Kyd and Schiller. The result is farcically unactable, as Beddoes intended it to be ('No one will ever read it'). But the important aspect of this play is that Isbrand is the only non-melodramatic figure. He is not, however, completely flummoxed by this other world in which he finds himself, as are Celia and Bonario, say, in *Volpone*. Surrounded by a set of puppets, robots in love with death, Hades' bobbins bound in mummy-cloth, Isbrand is clearly the dramatist's communication with his audience, the rational man, whose reason, here, is humour. And he triumphs.

The backdrop against which Isbrand is set, then, is that of a world, like capitalist society, in love with death, and in this play Beddoes revels in voluptuizing death. The grave becomes a bridal bed: the language of lovers, the vocabulary of the courtly love convention, is fused with a death which is life. Sibylla speaks to her ghost lover thus:

O Death! I am thy friend,  
 I struggle not with thee, I love thy state:  
 Thou canst be sweet and gentle, be so now;  
 And let me pass praying away into thee,  
 As twilight does into starry night.<sup>1</sup>

The body is the tomb, the grave of the flesh. We only live when we die. Here there is affinity with that Catholic metaphysic we find in Donne:

So soul into the soul may flow,  
 Though it to body first repair.<sup>2</sup>

This is the end of a long movement in literature. It has its origin in courtly love (a psychic need for its age), in the *Roman de la Rose*, which by the end of the sixteenth century becomes that sacramentalizing of the senses we find in Teresa de Jesus and Juan de la Cruz, the *amor de lonh* (later to become Mallarmé's 'l'absence') that claims the body as but the cumbrous cloth of flesh, 'But yet the body is his book'.<sup>3</sup> It is played out perhaps finally in the sensuous exuberance of an asexual poet like Hopkins side by side with that uterine death-longing of Rilke and the twentieth century. The high, serenely idealized, and feminine sexual love poetry of the masculine feudal age is exploited by the Catholic mystics (especially by Crashaw in England) and finds an acute commentator in Beddoes.

What more like Donne's

When bodies to their graves, souls from their graves  
 remove<sup>4</sup>

than Beddoes's

And life is a death,  
 Where the body's the tomb?<sup>5</sup>

There are many other examples of this in Beddoes's *Outidana*, in poems like the fragmentary 'Death Sweet', 'The Masque

<sup>1</sup> *Death's Jest-Book*, Act IV, sc. ii.

<sup>2</sup> John Donne, 'The Ecstasy'.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> 'The Anniversary.'

<sup>5</sup> 'Dirge' from *Outidana*.

of the Moon' and in *The Bride's Tragedy*, whilst Sibylla laments Wolfram's death to the Duke in *Death's Jest-Book* as follows:

Aye, say you that he's dead? You mean he is  
 No more excepted from Eternity.  
 If he were dead I should indeed despair.  
 Can a man die? Ay, as the sun doth set:  
 It is the earth that falls away from light;  
 Fixed in the heavens, although unseen by us,  
 The immortal life and light remains triumphant.

She concludes,

Farewell, my love,—I will not say to thee  
 Pale corpse,—we do not part for many days.  
 A little sleep, a little waking more,  
 And then we are together out of life.<sup>1</sup>

Now it soon becomes clear that Beddoes's interest in the putrefaction of the flesh is not that of Donne (in 'The Comparison'), nor of Baudelaire (in 'La Charogne'), that is, as an assertion of the ultimate truth of man's spiritual life. It is not that of the Carmelites, of the Bürger terror school, of the Elizabethan horror writers, nor of the squeaking skeletons of the De Sade school of *grand guignol*, though there is much of *grand guignol* in Beddoes.

Beddoes speaks of death in the language of a love affair. With him death becomes baroque. It is treated with the heavy physical sensuousness of passionate sexual love. It is the final culmination, maybe the sublimation, of that long trail of love poetry from Petrarch and the Provençal troubadours onwards, that sexual *nostalgie* which now finds expression in our erithistic society in a longing for death, but here, in Beddoes, in a longing for death in entirely physical terms—simply, that is, because death is absent. Thus death is relegated to a frame of reference in life and the death-wish, as Beddoes intended, is conquered. So death becomes comfortable, cloaked in all the associations of sexuality:

Another hour, another dream:  
 A red wound on a snowy breast,  
 A rude hand stifling the last scream,  
 On rosy lips a death-kiss pressed.

<sup>1</sup> *Death's Jest-Book*, Act II, sc. ii.

Blood on the sheets, blood on the floor,  
 The murderer stealing through the door.  
 'Now,' said the voice, with comfort deep,  
 'She sleeps indeed, and thou may'st sleep.'<sup>1</sup>

The ultimate of sensuous expression is to be found in death. What more repulsive in its *baroquerie*, but what better satire of twentieth-century materialism with its love of luxury than Beddoes's lyric 'Rosily Dying' which concludes,

O pretty rose, hast thou thy flowery passions?  
 Then put thyself into a scented rage,  
 And breathe on me some poisonous revenge.  
 For it was I, thou languid, silken blush,  
 Who orphaned thy green family of thee,  
 In thy closed infancy: therefore receive  
 My life, and spread it on thy shrunken petals,  
 And give to me thy pink, reclining death.

There is something, too, of the flavour of *The Loved One* about Beddoes's 'Sorrow'. For death, linked to such sensual corruption, becomes a critique of man's love of comfort which he tries to perpetuate beyond the grave in elaborate tombstones and effigies. We know that Beddoes saw a 'good collection of Holbeins' at Basle and was enthusiastic about them. Holbein's *Dance of Death*, including the Babies, was added as illustration to Gosse's Fanfrolico edition.<sup>2</sup> The two harmonize because both Holbein and Beddoes were, through the contrast of rich imagery and stark subject, satirizing the philistinism of luxury.

All the characters in *Death's Jest-Book* are, except for Isbrand, automatons in love with death and Beddoes comes forward with some of his finest passages to depict this. A typical example which expresses his gift fairly is in *The Improvisatore*:

<sup>1</sup> 'The Boding Dreams.'

<sup>2</sup> The 1890 two-volume edition of Beddoes's works, edited by Edmund Gosse, put out by the Fanfrolico Press, London, on hand-made paper and limited to 750 copies, has been superseded by the definitive edition of Beddoes's works edited by H. W. Donner (Oxford and London, Humphrey Milford, 1935). The best selection is perhaps Ramsay Colles's edition in the Muses' Library series (London, Routledge, and New York, E. P. Dutton, 1907).



Just at his feet a grinning skeleton  
 Stretched its worm-twined arms of chalky bone,  
 And rattled its thin finger in the blast;  
 Its spiked teeth were dumbly chattering fast,  
 As if its death-dream were disturbed; by him  
 Another lay with yawning jawbone grim,  
 Through which the cold wind whistled; down its cheek  
 Crept death's chill sweat; Rodolph essayes to pass,  
 But fear chained down his strength; with struggles weak  
 He plunged among the death-cemented mass.<sup>1</sup>

Now there is nothing new simply in this juxtaposition of the physically corrupting and the voluptuous. It is a feature of romantic literature. The convent where De Sade's Justine finds herself has punishment cells where, she is told, 'on y place avec vous des rats, des lézards, des crapauds, des serpents'. It is an integral theme in Baudelaire, Borel and the lesser *bousingot*<sup>2</sup> writers, who never tired of describing some fair, fleshly creature, unassailably virtuous as well as beautiful, damned to putrefaction amongst worms and reptiles. In M. G. Lewis's famous *The Monk*, one of the earliest of this genre (1795), the pregnant Agnes is condemned to die in surroundings of which Beddoes would have made the most: she describes them for us with care:

Sometimes I felt the bloated toad, hideous and pampered with the poisonous vapours of the dungeon, dragging his loathsome length along my bosom. Sometimes the quick cold lizard roused me, leaving his slimy track upon my face, and entangling itself in the tresses of my wild and matted hair. Often have I at waking found my fingers ringed with the long worms which bred in the corrupted flesh of my infant . . .

Luxury and corruption feast on each other. In *King John*, Constance speaks of death Beddoesianly, in words that show us the old bard could overgo them all when he wanted to:

O amiable lovely death!  
 Thou odoriferous stench! sound rottenness!  
 Arise forth from the couch of lasting night,  
 Thou hate and terror to posterity,  
 And I will kiss thy detestable bones;

<sup>1</sup> Stanza XXV.

<sup>2</sup> I prefer Aristide Marie's spelling of this word to Miss Starkie's.

And put my eyeballs in thy vaulty brows;  
 And ring these fingers with thy household worms;  
 And stop this gap of breath with fulsome dust;  
 And be a carrion monster like thyself:  
 Come, grin on me: and I will think thou smilest,  
 And buss thee as thy wife! Misery's love,  
 O, come to me!<sup>1</sup>

With Beddoes, then, tears, bosoms, roses, red blood, all the props of courtly love, are juxtaposed with worms, tombs, skulls, bones. Even in the early *Scaroni* death takes the physical form of a veiled woman, whilst Wolfram's ghost haunts the Duke and advises him that

'Tis better too  
 To die, as thou art, young, in the first grace  
 And full of beauty.<sup>2</sup>

'The Phantom-Wooer', 'that loved a lady fair', courts her in these terms:

Young soul put off your flesh, and come  
 With me into the quiet tomb,  
 Our bed is lovely, dark and sweet;  
 The earth will swing us as she goes,  
 Beneath our coverlid of snows,  
 And the warm leaden sheet.

But there is something more besides this rather artificial tension in Beddoes. This is not the mere death-wish, nor the model spooking of Donne's 'The Apparition'. Beddoes's ghosts rise and beckon humans to the tomb, but they are surprisingly robust, cadavers of this world rather than of another. This is the point. They are people of this world who are yet not condemned to obey the laws of this world: one feels the whole force of Beddoes's sympathy behind them *as a collective group*, rather than as individuals. Death is therefore reduced to terms of life. The phantoms are really afraid of the worm, sickeningly mortal still. Their honey-sweet syllables, a sort of verbal gangrene, only suggest the more potently their horror at their own decay. It is *grand guignol* cynicism which triumphs, through Isbrand, over the bourgeois society of luxury lovers, on the one level, and over the escape world, the

<sup>1</sup> Act III, sc. iv.

<sup>2</sup> *Death's Jest-Book*, Act IV, sc. iii.

world o' the dead, over death itself, therefore, on the other. We know that such was Beddoes's conscious intention from 'Hard Dying' (a poem in *The Last Man*), and especially in a verse-letter to Procter, in which he discusses the growth of his new work, where death is to be 'the fool o' the feast':

Who's he? I've dug him up and decked him trim  
And made a mock, a fool, a slave of him  
Who was the planet's tyrant: dotard Death:<sup>1</sup>

And so on. Humour, symbolized by Isbrand, was the supreme rational force in Beddoes's universe, what alone distinguished man from the higher mammals. But since Isbrand communicates, is affective, we do not stare at the work as an object, in amazed fascination, as we do with the totally introspective Donne, for we ourselves are involved in the affective representation. To this extent it is romantic and solipsistically idealist. Yet the interesting thing is—and it remains to my mind the ultimate criticism of *Death's Jest-Book*—that Isbrand is an 'individual' in the old-world, bourgeois sense. If this is thought to be reading an economic interpretation into the play, we must remember that Beddoes clearly asked for such. Humour is sanity, he says, and yet he affixes it to an 'individual' (just such as he was in his own life). But humour, above all gifts, is the result of social organization, the product of men *in company*. Even Koestler's theory of humour as the intersection of *associative* trains of words in one bisociative junctional word<sup>2</sup> bears this out, whilst Kant's 'incongruity', Bergson's arrest of the 'élan vital' of life, and Nicole's postulation of the moral basis of laughter, all tend to show that a man is not funny unless other men think he is funny. He cannot be funny 'individually'. The first thing we notice in a mental home (and to some extent in modern psychiatric practice) is the absence of a sense of humour. *Death's Jest-Book* satirizes a baroque world, a world fetid with the bourgeois illusion, disgraced by capitalist luxury. This world yields to the world o' the dead, to a society where bourgeois conventions do not operate. But individual man is still rational, he need not lust after the mummy country, as Isbrand puts it. He has his humour. Thus it is extremely significant

<sup>1</sup> Letter XXI, postmarks 7 March and 13 March 1826.

<sup>2</sup> *Insight and Outlook*.

that Isbrand (like his creator) is alone in this bizarre anticipation of Marxian society. He is an 'individual' in both worlds, for he does not share that prophetic longing for death of the (bourgeois) society which is dying, and he sees the absurdity of the robot-like puppets of the other, rising (communist) world o' the dead. He exactly epitomizes Beddoes's own solitude. For, mocking a society, Beddoes had to mock himself. The result is that *Death's Jest-Book* is autobiographical and therefore represents, as did the author's own life, the tragic squandering of a talent. Swinburne and Tennyson thought Beddoes brilliant, Landor (whom he met in Florence) praised him extravagantly, and more recently Emile Legouis has classed him with Shelley and Keats.<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt of Beddoes's greatness but there is no doubt also that he could have been far greater. It is an indictment of modern society that it lamed his expression. It did more, it threw him overboard, like its 'surplus' foodstuffs, and it is pathetic, rather than tragic, that this great figure should have spent a lifetime in trying to make the macabre grotesque, to make laughable Western man's deepest fear, the dread of something after death, the undiscovered country. Beddoes's solution was no solution and this is proved by the increasing madness of our society (I mean literal madness. It is now computed that a conservative estimate of mentally defectives in America puts them at one per hundred of the whole population, and that one out of every ten Americans will spend some of his life in a mental home.<sup>2</sup>) Humour is collective, not individual, but whether collection rather than individuality is what distinguishes man from beast is outside the scope of this essay. But it is a depressing conclusion to centuries of endeavour to think we are only better than apes because we can laugh. For this is what Isbrand says:

O cap and bells, ye eternal emblems, hieroglyphics of man's supreme right in nature; O ye, that only fall on the deserving, while oak, palm, laurel, and bay rankle on *their* foreheads, whose deserts are oft more payable at the other extremity: who shall be honoured with you? Come, candidates, the cap and bells are empty.

<sup>1</sup> *Short History of English Literature* (1934).

<sup>2</sup> Albert Deutsch, *The Mentally Ill in America*, New York, Doubleday Doran, 1937.

HUMPHREY HARE

## ‘WITHIN A LEYDEN JAR’

SWINBURNE AND WATTS-DUNTON

(1879-1909)

BEHIND the prim suburban façade of No. 2, The Pines, life was from the first, calm, regular and orderly. But it was Watts's life; it was the life of a retired provincial solicitor with literary interests; it was a life in which routine became hallowed and incident was rigorously excluded. The sharp pangs of rebellion and revolt, the disorders of excess, the eccentricities of genius, were deftly suppressed. With what determined tact, with what soft yet unremitting persuasion Watts laboured to tame his captive poet, to reform his genius to the accepted moral standards of the Victorian middle class! And with what extraordinary success his labours were crowned! At last Swinburne had been persuaded to ‘do something that might do him permanent good’. It was indeed time and the practical circumstances which had brought this about are clear.

Throughout the winter of 1877-8, it appears that he had fallen into prolonged fits of physical and mental torpor. Appalling disorder had prevailed in his rooms: letters and manuscripts were lost: business communications remained unanswered. In January he wrote to P. H. Hayne: ‘After an intermittent illness of some months’ duration, I find on turning over a fearful mass of unsorted papers, proofs, correspondence, etc., etc., a note from you dated as far back as October 12th. . . . During my illness . . . my books, papers and parcels, have got into such confusion that for two days I thought I had lost the most important manuscript I have. . . . That has turned up—but many other things are missing. Among these I fear must be the biographies you mention of Edgar Poe. . . . Generally I am as yet, being still somewhat of an invalid, quite unable to say what has or has not come to hand here during the last few months.’

In February, by an effort of will, he had mustered sufficient strength to visit Nichol in Glasgow. He was the professor's guest at 14 Montgomerie Crescent, Kelvinside. Here he read some of

John Davidson's unpublished poems, received him with solemnity and, remembering perhaps his own youthful interview with the august Rogers, placed his hand upon Davidson's head while addressing him as 'Poet'. He was to be seen, too, so Alexander Hedderwick told Gosse, 'marching about the Quadrangle' of the University 'very fashionably dressed, in a loose-fitting long Melton coat of dark blue, and the neatest of little shoes, his top hat balanced on his great mop of hair'. And there were other diversions: he was shown some 'erotic correspondence and Priapic poetry of Burns which are simply sublime. Oh! how frail are our attempts on the Chastity of the Muses to that "large utterance of the early Gods"'. Amid these excitements he prepared his forthcoming volume of the second series of *Poems and Ballads*.

By the end of the month he was back in London and in March his health broke down again. On 11 April he wrote: 'I am hardly yet recovering from a very tedious and painful attack of sickness . . . which resulted in depriving me for weeks of all natural sleep and appetite—nay, well-nigh of all power to swallow or digest anything. . . . I literally can write no more this morning.' And on 27 May, though he was playing with the idea of accepting Hugo's invitation to represent English Poetry at the Centenary Commemoration of the death of Voltaire, it was clear that he was too ill to go. 'I have been', he wrote, 'a bed-ridden invalid for many days—this being the first I have crawled out into the open-air—but I think this summons would raise me like a second Lazarus from the very grave. If it be physically possible, I will go.' But the months crept unhappily on with Swinburne in the grip of 'his fearful propensity'. In July Lady Jane Swinburne, his mother, received an alarming letter from Lord Houghton. But in the same month he was fleetingly well enough to pay Jowett a visit. In August, however, his friends again became alarmed. He refused to see them, to leave London or, even, to answer their letters. 'I feel great anxiety about the Bard,' wrote Powell. 'I have had no answer to several cards and gifts. Has the old tempter seized him? What is the matter?' In November Lady Jane was writing in distress to Watts. Could Swinburne be 'induced . . . to do something that might do him permanent good'? Should she come to London and fetch him? It was of no avail. For months, in increasing exhaustion, he lay in his rooms, tended only by the devoted Mrs. MacGill.

And what, one may well ask, was Walter Theodore Watts (the Dunton was not added till 1896) doing all this time? It is clear that he was able to watch developments from closer at hand than anyone else. He lived in the same street; he managed the poet's affairs; he was in correspondence with Lady Jane. Why did he wait to act till June 1879? He knew that Lady Jane would be only too grateful to be relieved of an appalling anxiety. But Watts was cautious and wise. To assume what had once been Admiral Swinburne's prerogative a moment too soon might, he suspected, be met with resistance and resentment. Who can say he was not right? And when the moment came, and from Great James Street he removed a dying Swinburne, utterly prostrate, who had taken no food for days, the poet was no longer capable of objection. And when Watts did act, he acted with great promptitude. Taking Swinburne to his sister's house at Putney, Ivy Lodge, he at once informed Lady Jane. She replied on 10 June: 'I am so glad Algernon is out of town. Bring him on Thursday. Tell me what I had best do about his treatment.' The Press reported that he was 'at death's door', but only a month later, with his marvellous powers of recuperation, he was writing to Lord Houghton: 'My mother has just shown me your note to her enquiring after my health; so I add a line of acknowledgment to her reply. I was very unwell for weeks together before I left London, and a good deal reduced in strength by prolonged insomnia and consequent loss of appetite and exhaustion; but a day or two at a friend's house near Putney Heath, with plenty of walking exercise thereon and thereabouts, sufficed to set me up—higher I may say than I had been for many months. Thence I came down here to see the last of this place [Holmwood], which we leave for good in October.' He was working at *Tristram*, *Mary Stuart* and his *Study of Shakespeare*.

But what, Lady Jane may well have asked—though it was the last time she was ever to need to do so—was to be done with Algernon? Holmwood was on the point of being sold. Obviously he could never be allowed to live in London by himself again. Where could he go? Watts supplied the answer. He had decided to annex permanently and for himself the 'beautiful influence'. A regime would be established, the distressing traits eliminated from the poet's character, and he, Watts, would attain to that once seemingly impossible ambition: he would live in the closest communion with genius, indeed he would be its confidant, its guardian.



But how was genius to be persuaded? Fortunately the poet was in financial difficulties, and now the Admiral's library was to be sold. Lady Jane was prepared to let him have at once half the eventual sum that was to be his due. And this £1,000 was conditional on 'his giving up his lodgings in London' to live with Watts. 'This', she said, 'is absolutely necessary.' Swinburne had no alternative. In the meantime Watts had rented No. 2, The Pines, Putney Hill. The poet became quite reconciled to the idea and remarked that the view was 'really very nice'. Society had claimed a rebel. And this happy and desirable event had, ironically, been due to alcoholic poisoning. But how was the permanency achieved? How was it that Swinburne, now aged forty-three, accepted this dominion for thirty years?

One year during which he did not leave The Pines, was sufficient to restore him to health. Watts instituted a precise regularity into the day's programme. By a process of suggestion, infinitely subtle, he proceeded to cut off alcohol by slow and steady degrees. Brandy was disposed of; they drank port—the true poet's drink. But should not Swinburne drink the wines of his beloved France? Claret was substituted. But what, after all, could be a more romantic beverage than 'Shakespeare's brown October, our own glorious and incomparable British beer'? Bottled ale, and in small quantities, became the poet's most violent dissipation. In October 1880, when Lady Jane visited The Pines, she was astonished at the change. 'I am so glad', she wrote to Watts, 'to have seen my son well and happy . . . What a contrast to former days!' In one thing, however, she was to be disappointed. 'The return to the religious faith of his youth,' she wrote, 'I feel is so much more hopeful when that fatal tendency from which he has suffered so much is got the better of.' Even Watts was never quite able to effect this.

But this one year of convalescence achieved, his health perfectly restored, what persuaded Swinburne to continue subject to this jealous guardianship? For a jealous guardianship, arrogant and self-assertive under the tact, the wariness, the delicacy of its application, it was. 'From this moment . . .', Watts boasted, 'Swinburne's connexion with Bohemian London ceased entirely.' And behind the solicitude for Swinburne's health, for his reputation, for his finances, for his manuscripts, there was a proprietary air which was determined to create a Swinburne according to the

Wattsian mode. Hence he was jealous of Swinburne's past—a past that must be eliminated, denied, repudiated, so that the genius of Swinburne might become a projection of Watts. And this, in effect, it very nearly did. For, indeed, once installed, there was never any question of Swinburne's leaving The Pines.

Imperceptibly, from the period of Mazzini's domination—not to give too precise a date to it—the emphasis was shifting from the sadistic in his character to the masochistic, from rebellion to submission. These two compensating traits had always been there, had, indeed, been the basis of his temperament, the motive forces in his life to a degree exaggerated beyond the normal. The controversial discords of the immediately preceding years were but the final—and superficial—manifestations of revolt. And now, with the sharp lessons of self-induced ill-health, mortgaged dignity and failing genius he had no longer the strength of will to assert his right to an independent but unmanageable existence. His temperament found its solace in a subjection which, if less impassioned, less ecstatic than his relations with Mazzini, was fuller, deeper, wider, which included not only his mind and his art, but every detail of his life, his eating, his drinking, his exercise and his rest, even the visitors he might receive. And Watts did something else too, he restored his faith in his genius.

What, one is tempted to ask, was there about Watts that enabled him to exercise this curious domination? Could anyone else have achieved precisely this? For all that has been written about him, all that is recorded of him both by enemies and admirers, Watts remains an essentially elusive character. Can the two following quotations, written from very different points of view, be made to throw any light on the problem? Mrs. Watts-Dunton—a young lady to whom Watts was married in 1905 at the age of seventy-three—wrote in description of the poet's attitude to her husband: 'The almost adoring expression which came into Swinburne's eyes when he looked at Walter made me realize how deeply and gratefully conscious he was of the incalculable blessing the *magnetic* presence of his friend had been to him all the happy years he had spent under his roof'. While Sir Edmund Gosse, in a letter to T. J. Wise, dated 29 May 1921, wrote less amicably (Gosse always felt that Watts had ruined the most fascinating friendship of his life): 'What you say about the hold Watts-Dunton had on him is very true. It was a sort of rattlesnake fascination, which left

the victim as helpless as a rabbit. Lord Redesdale, who had a remarkable experience of Watts-Dunton's business ways, always held that he exercised over nervous persons a directly *magnetic* influence.' It will be observed that the word *magnetic* appears in both accounts. But how does a 'magnetic presence' or 'a magnetic influence' square with Sir Max Beerbohm's 'dear little old man', with the 'something gnome-like', with the 'chubbiness', and the 'eternally crumpled frock-coat', or with A. C. Benson's vision of a 'clotted' moustache? No, the adoring wife and the antagonistic acquaintance have fallen into the same error for opposite reasons. Watts's 'magnetism'—whatever exactly that may mean—can be dismissed. There was a will of iron concealed behind a façade of exquisite tact, illimitable consideration. And if from time to time Watts thwarted an ambition, or forbade a pleasure, the pang of disappointment suffered by the poet but bound him the closer to its author. 'I must say', so Swinburne expressed his feelings, 'I do feel the want of a God (of faith and friendship) to whom I might offer sacrifice of thanksgiving for the gift of such a good friend as I have in you.'

Having captured his genius, the 'old horror of Putney', as Gosse called him, set about directing his activities into proper channels. Watts was determined that Swinburne should become not only a success financially and socially—that is by standards of middle-class propriety—but also, one cannot help but feel, in a manner that would be worthy of Watts himself. The more immediate results were necessarily visible in Swinburne's social life. There were, of course, good reasons for not permitting the poet to go about London as before. And this, indeed, Swinburne realized very well himself. 'In the atmosphere of London,' he wrote, 'I can never expect more than a fortnight, at best, of my usual health and strength.' While already he 'never was fresher or stronger or happier at twenty than now and for many weeks back'. But this embargo was imposed, too, upon visits of any duration to friends outside London. His presence at the celebration of the Eton ninth jubilee was forbidden. Watts had, naturally, not been invited. Were the old 'scholastic associations' really likely to cause irreparable backsliding in a single night? Or was it that Watts, being excluded, was jealous? Except for one visit to Jowett, in August 1883, only Lady Jane was permitted to entertain the poet unaccompanied by Watts. And this she regularly did, until her

death, in the various houses she inhabited after the sale of Holmwood, and thus Swinburne stayed for considerable periods at Bradford-on-Avon, Cheltenham, Aston, Chestal and Solihull.

Accompanied by Watts, however, excursions to the sea were not in these early years forbidden. In 1882 they went to Guernsey and Sark, which Swinburne was delighted to show to his companion. Hugo, as usual, was not there. It was the accustomed disappointment. Would he never meet the third of the three great men—Landor, Mazzini, Hugo—whom he had spent his life in hero-worshipping? And then, on his return to London in October, he received a summons to attend the fiftieth anniversary of the first performance of *Le Roi s'Amuse*. Watts had but little admiration for Hugo; he raised objections. But even he could not deter Swinburne from doing homage to this particular god. There was only one alternative: Watts must go too, in spite of his toothache. On 20 November they were in Paris.

Was the meeting the anti-climax that has been asserted? There have been stories that would tend to make it appear so: the Master, now eighty years old, responding to Swinburne's flow of adulation with 'Mais qu'est-ce qu'il me raconte là? Qu'est-ce qu'il me raconte?' and his displeasure at Swinburne's enthusiastic breaking of the glass out of which he had drunk the Master's health. Indeed, there is absent from Swinburne's letters the frenzied worship that followed his meetings with Landor and Mazzini. But he was older now, and perhaps no longer capable of such exalted emotions. His regard for Hugo never wavered, as is shown in his passionate grief at Hugo's death three years later. In fact the meeting seems to have gone off very well, though the hereditary deafness from which he was now suffering detracted something from his pleasure. Hugo said on receiving him: 'Je suis heureux de vous serrer la main comme à mon fils'. Swinburne dined with him and, 'after dinner, he drank my health with a little speech, of which—tho' I sat just opposite him—my accursed deafness prevented my hearing a single word. This, however, was the only drawback—tho' certainly a considerable one—to my pleasure.' Two days later, at the Théâtre Français, Swinburne and Watts attended the performance of *Le Roi s'Amuse*. Between the third and fourth acts, Swinburne was invited into Hugo's box. The Master asked him, 'Êtes-vous content?' and Swinburne, though

unable to hear a word of the performance, said he was indeed content. This seems to have been the extent of their relations. Literary Paris was *en fête* and Hugo the centre of the celebrations. Nevertheless, there were compensations. 'During the past few days,' wrote a journalist, 'he [Swinburne] has been the lion of some exotic blue-stocking salons, and the journalist poets, like Catulle Mendès, have written wonderful articles on his "strange silhouette", his "measureless brow", his "pale lips" and "the striking mobility of the features of the bizarre artist"'. Could recognition of fame go further? Then there was Tola Dorian, 'the translatress of some of my verses into French—a Russian princess by birth [Princess Mestchersky] and—need I add—a nihilist by creed and practice'. And when the nihilist princess proved also to be extremely rich and the possessor not only of 'a most lovely little daughter'—his passion for babies was already in the ascendant—but of 'a magnificent stud. . . . Russian and Arabian horses', well might he exclaim: 'Fair owner: spirit, fire, grace!' At her house, too, he had the pleasure of meeting 'a very noble and amiable old man'—Leconte de Lisle. Altogether, they proved to be 'five of the most memorable days of my life'.

They were, too, to be the last spent beyond the shores of England. Watts disliked foreign travel. Soon Swinburne was agreeing with him that nothing could beat the English coast. Year after year Watts led his charge to the sea like a horse to the water—to Sidestrand, to Eastbourne, to Lancing-on-Sea. The poet was permitted to swim under Watts's anxious eye and, since even holidays should be turned to account, he was encouraged to write descriptive verses. This was 'Mr. Swinburne's later development as a nature lover and poet of the sea'—a development which, unfortunately, was totally alien to his genius. But, indeed, Watts seems to have cared but little for the aesthetic merits of his captive's work. Propriety was the touchstone by which they were judged. Could not Algernon see the danger of ill-advised words, the mire into which lack of proper principles so inevitably led? Those appalling letters, for instance, which kept cropping up on the deaths of their recipients like a recurring nightmare—how much better if they had never been written! Indeed, what might not the consequences to Algernon have been had Walter not been there to manage the delicate negotiations for him? For after Rossetti's death, in 1886, Fanny Schott became possessed of a

correspondence which had at all costs to be bought back from her; and after Howell's, a still more compromising packet fell into the hands of a publisher called George Redway, and it required the exercise of all Watts's business acumen to exchange it for the copyright of *A Word for the Navy*. Besides, look at the results of publishing *Poems and Ballads*! Could not Algernon realize how unnecessary and impolitic it was to flout the public's sense of decency? And Swinburne was now predisposed to listen to this constantly reiterated theme. At length he began to think that possibly some of his early poems had indeed been composed in error. Ought he perhaps to suppress them? But then would this not merely direct fresh interest towards them? Watts agreed that it might. But were there not other mistakes in the past which could be more conveniently set right? *Whitmania* (1887) disposed of one 'unhealthy' admiration (Watts 'hated him most heartily') and *Mr. Whistler's Lecture on Art* (1888) of another. Concerning the latter Watts admitted that he had 'persuaded Swinburne to write the really brilliant article' which, as Gosse notes, is a typical example of Swinburne's later and depressing prose style. It was published in *The Fortnightly Review* and was an onslaught on Art for Art's sake and, indeed, the whole of Whistler's aesthetic theory which he himself had once so devoutly shared. Whistler replied in *The World*: 'Have I shot down the singer in the far off when I thought him safe at my side?' And no doubt Watts was gratified to read the decisive sentence: 'I have lost a confrère and gained an acquaintance, one Algernon Charles Swinburne, outsider, Putney.' The breach, after thirty years of friendship, was thus made complete and Watts felt that another pre-redemption influence had been satisfactorily disposed of. Baudelaire, too, was ultimately to be denied. In 1901, writing to William Sharp concerning the Tauchnitz volume Sharp had edited of Selections from his poems, Swinburne would 'have preferred on all accounts that *In the Bay* had filled the place you have allotted to *Ave Atque Vale*, a poem to which you are altogether too kind in my opinion, as others have been before you. I never had really much in common with Baudelaire . . . ' Was there no cock to crow? But by then he was no longer capable of judging his own works save through the eyes of Watts. *Erechtheus* would, he thought, 'have been a better and a fairer example of the author's works' for inclusion than—*Atalanta*!

During these last years his industry was prodigious. After 1880 some twenty-four volumes were published during his life-time and a further five posthumously, while from T. J. Wise’s vast collection of manuscripts, now in the British Museum, something approaching 100 were edited and privately printed. There were, too, between 1882 and 1909, 223 contributions to reviews, magazines and newspapers. Watts approved. Indeed, what could be more satisfactory? Swinburne was happy and busy, while the financial results, under his own able management, were really quite gratifying. But into this vast, overwhelming flood it is neither possible, nor desirable, to do more than dip. The mere contemplation of its bulk induces a certain lassitude, while its perusal culminates in an extraordinary tedium. Nor are the reasons for this far to seek. His technique was at least as good as it had ever been, the astonishing music of which he was capable still poured out in endless, insistent metrical stresses. But now there was no longer any essential experience to communicate. As verse is piled upon verse, stanza upon stanza, with an incredible virtuosity of rhyme, alliteration and assonance, it becomes increasingly clear that there is no outline to the flood of his distressing fluency. Words, phrases, stanzas, have no meaning beyond their musical sound: nothing is conveyed. It is as if we were contemplating the exquisite convolutions of a carved marble chimney-piece—the same indeed that we gazed upon with so much admiration in former years—but now it has lost all meaning: the hearth is empty, the fire has gone out.

And Watts was always at hand with advice and encouragement. ‘For the last thirty years’, wrote Watts in 1910, ‘his thoughts had been mainly absorbed in two subjects. The first of these was the study and contemplation of nature in various localities. The second . . . was childhood.’ And if the contemplation of nature led to an unbridled and meaningless fluency, the presence in the household of Watts’s nephew, Bertie Mason—of whom Swinburne was already writing in 1884: ‘When my forthcoming volume [*A Midsummer Holiday and Other Poems*] is out, I shall have published fifty poems on a single child’—led to a no less distressing bathos:

A baby shines as bright  
If winter or if May be  
On eyes that keep in sight  
A baby.



Though dark the skies or grey be,  
It fills our eyes with light  
If midnight or midday be.

Love hails it, day and night,  
The sweetest thing that may be,  
Yet cannot praise aright  
A baby.

And as each mechanical composition was struck off by the machine Watts was on hand to assure the author that it was 'the best poem I ever wrote'. Indeed, from the moment Swinburne went to live at The Pines there seems never to have been a doubt in his mind as to the quality of his productions. Watts at least gave him the happiness, whatever he may have come to think about some of his early work, of complete certainty in his present genius. Nevertheless, even this last period produced, if no great poetry, at least work of merit. Outstanding in the interminable procession of his compositions is *Tristram of Lyonesse*. This work, which had been lingering in his mind since 1858, he intended to be his masterpiece. In 1871 he wrote the sonorous invocation to Love which forms the Prelude, but the forced labour of *Bothwell* and other avocations interfered with the poem's immediate completion. It lay on his hands too long and when, after 'parcels of *Tristram*' had been composed at intervals, he set himself in the summer of 1881 to complete it, the inspiration had faded. As always the narrative or epic form eluded him and he was brought to realize that in fact it had become 'a succession of dramatic scenes and pictures with descriptive settings of backgrounds'. In its totality it cannot be considered an unqualified success. It is likely, too, that Watts was instrumental in toning down some of the more frankly amorous passages, while he insisted upon its being published in the same volume together with a number of morally unimpeachable verses which Swinburne designated 'Songs of Innocence' and which were not calculated to enhance the major poem's effectiveness. The *Tale of Balen*, published in 1896, is also not without merit. His imagination played about the vivid freedoms of Northumberland which once he had known and 'a sun more blithe, a merrier breeze' stirred and illumined the drab hangings of the Putney villa. Perhaps for a moment he was really able to persuade himself that he lived 'close to the edge of

a noble down'. And in two of the closing stanzas, with the dying Balen, he recaptured, with a wistful, insistent nostalgia, the surge and lifting of a boy's heart:

And there low lying, as hour on hour  
Fled, all his life in all its flower  
Came back as in a sunlit shower  
Of dreams, when sweet-souled sleep has power  
On life less sweet and glad to be.  
He drank the draught of life's first wine  
Again: he saw the moorland shine,  
The rioting rapids of the Tyne,  
The woods, the cliffs, the sea.

The joy that lives at heart and home,  
The joy to rest, the joy to roam,  
The joy of crags and scaurs he clomb,  
The rapture of the encountering foam  
Embraced and breasted of the boy,  
The first good steed his knees bestrode,  
The first wild sound of songs that flowed  
Through ears that thrilled and heart that glowed,  
Fulfilled his death with joy.

In politics too, Watts was gradually able to exercise an ameliorating influence. Were visions of the Laureateship for his charge already hovering in that far-seeing brain? The difficulty was that Swinburne had taken up a very definite attitude towards Russia. The Czar, the 'waxing' evil, had become fixed in Swinburne's mind as the prototype of all tyrants, had indeed taken the place in his troubled political mythology that Napoleon III had once occupied. And this was a sentiment that Watts had not the time to eradicate before irreparable harm had been done. The Laureateship passed Putney by on the official grounds of insult offered to a foreign crowned head. The question remains: had that offer been extended, would Swinburne have accepted it, or would he have refused it as he did Curzon's offer, some years later, of an honorary Oxford degree? It is probable that Watts set but little store by the latter honour, but the Laureateship would have been a very different matter. And who, indeed, by 1892, as we shall see, was better fitted than Algernon to celebrate in dignified and faultless

stanzas such public events as were deserving of immortal commemoration? It was unfortunately true that his favourite exclamation of emphatic denial was: 'May I die a Poet Laureate!' But this was a relic of pre-redemption days, and even if the sentiment behind it was still strong, could not Watts have influenced it as he had influenced so much else? This, we shall never know, since, after much delay, Alfred Austin proved to be the superbly inept official choice.

In fact, Swinburne's political views on foreign affairs were, from Watts's point of view, completely out of hand. It is probable that Watts had no very clear views on this subject himself and, therefore, was the less able to influence Swinburne's. He was forced to content himself with endeavouring to suppress the more violent outbursts and even in this was not always successful. The most notable development during these years was a gradually increasing Francophobia. He had, it is true, never altogether recovered from his disappointment at the Conservative tendencies of the Third Republic. But his 'inherited loyalty' to France had remained reasonably secure during Hugo's lifetime. But now, with the Master's death, he no longer felt under any obligation to make undue allowances:

Quenched is the light that lit thee; dead the lord  
Whose lyre outsang the storm, outshone the sword.

And it was becoming quite clear to him that France was behaving in an exceedingly objectionable manner. In the first place the comments in the Parisian Press on the subject of Stead's famous articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in July 1885—of which the paragraphs that dealt with sadism ('Why the cries of the victims are not heard' and 'Strapping girls down') made a particular impression in France—did not hesitate to link Swinburne's name with the practices described. This was bad enough, and called forth from Swinburne the *Rondeaux Parisiens*, which, however, were so violently vituperative that no journal would print them; but when in 1886 it became clear that France had allied herself with that despicable despot Alexander III in a Franco-Russian *entente* he was impelled to write three sonnets, *The Russ and the Frenchman*, which were followed in the next year, 1887, by *Russo Gallia*. Watts was able to withhold these effusions from publication; but in them Swinburne had established his new attitude to the land

from which, so he had once imagined, he had derived ‘particles of my blood’. Nor was this attitude in any way ameliorated by the criticism of England that became common in the French Press, some years later, at the period of the Boer War.

Falsehood, thy name is France !

The rise of German militarism and her apparently increasing autocracy did not pass unnoticed at The Pines. The Kaiser gradually became in Swinburne’s view a counterpart of the Czar, and his indignation reached its culmination when those two monarchs met with mutual grandiloquence in 1905. And so it began to seem to him that England, though by no means perfect, was surrounded by nations whose governments were infinitely less democratic than, and possibly even dangerous to, the Empire which, much to Watts’s satisfaction, was gradually taking the place in his mind of that now discarded ‘universal republic’ as the bright hope for the proper governance of the world.

However disastrous Swinburne’s attacks on foreign crowned heads may ultimately have proved to have been, the gradual formation of this attitude in foreign politics was of considerable assistance to Watts in the proper ordering of the poet’s views in the realm of home affairs. As he did not fail to point out: if the tolerant spirit with which the British Empire was governed was the hope of the world, calumny from outside must not be reinforced by criticism from within. But there were formidable difficulties to be overcome. In the first place Swinburne in his Mazzinian distrust of all monarchies and perhaps from some romantic hereditary feeling for the Stuarts—a not uncommon paradox—had no love for the Hanoverians. The Queen had, fortunately not publicly, been consistently treated with scant respect. This Watts considered must be changed. While in the second place Swinburne was in the difficulty of disliking Mr. Gladstone, who led the party he was popularly supposed, owing to his volume of 1871, to support. This was a dilemma Watts set himself ardently to resolve.

As regards the Queen, Watts’s diplomacy had some prospect of success. Had not Swinburne already replied, with what appeared to be a hopeful spontaneity, to ‘some insolent lines addressed by a Russian poet to the Empress of India’ by composing *The White Czar* in 1877? Watts took every opportunity of bringing to

Swinburne's notice the attacks which appeared in the foreign Press upon the Queen who was, after all, the representative of the country. He pointed out that the office she held was in direct succession to Elizabeth and Cromwell, rulers whom Swinburne permitted himself to admire. And then, on 2 March 1882, there occurred an event which stimulated all Swinburne's chivalrous instincts. A lunatic, Roderick MacLean, fired a pistol at the Queen as she was driving in Windsor and was promptly arrested with the assistance of Eton boys. The combination of the Queen's calm courage, his nostalgia for Eton, and the romantic youth of her defenders, was overwhelming. He marked his change of attitude with a sonnet:

No braver soul drew bright and queenly breath  
Since England wept upon Elizabeth.

And five years later Watts prevailed upon him to write a song for the Jubilee, though 'Watts wished me to say, and thinks I should have said, more about the Queen than the little word I did say'. However, Watts was able to feel satisfaction at the progress made.

The reorientation of Swinburne's views in politics was not, of course, a process that could be immediately achieved. The growing dislike of Mr. Gladstone was, however, enhanced by two quite separate events. The first was his alleged callousness in leaving General Gordon to his fate in a besieged Khartoum. Gordon had been elevated by the Press into exactly the kind of romantic hero that Swinburne most admired. Steadfast, chivalrous and betrayed, he had, in Swinburne's opinion, been 'nailed up and spat on like the head of Christ', owing to the treachery of Mr. Gladstone and his government, who were 'Irresolute, instable as water—Yea and false as water':

Forsaken, silent, Gordon dies and gives  
Example: loud, and shameless Gladstone lives,  
No faction unembraced or unbetrayed,  
No chance unwelcomed and no vote unweighed. . . .

These explosive satires Watts was able to suppress. But there was another and more purely political event which aroused Swinburne's anger: Mr. Gladstone announced his policy of Home

Rule for Ireland. To this policy Swinburne was violently opposed. Without doubt the basic reason for his opposition was, though in his public statements he condemned the methods of the Fenians, his feeling that the English race had a 'mission' and that its strength would be impaired by any disunity in the United Kingdom. He was thus thankfully able to give his support to Chamberlain's new Unionist party in the election of 1886 and published *The Commonweal, A Song for Unionists*, in which he attacked Mr. Gladstone and Parnell. And in *The Jubilee*, published in 1887, he makes the idea of a 'mission' quite clear. How could it be otherwise when in England, the 'Crowning nation', 'The watchword Freedom fails not . . .' ? It followed from this, of course, that smaller nations must be liberated by being brought within the Empire—by force if necessary. From this point Swinburne's political utterances were perfectly logical. They culminated in his poems on the Boer War, where he gave encouragement:

To scourge these dogs, agape with jaws afoam,  
Down out of life. Strike, England, and strike home.

The Mazzinian revolutionary had, Watts might congratulate himself, become the Jingo imperialist.

After 1890 the monastic retirement of The Pines became more complete. The visits to the seaside, except for one ultimate expedition to Cromer in 1904, ceased. The visits from friends which up till this time had, though heavily invigilated by Watts, still been reasonably frequent, now came to an end. Indeed, there were no longer many old friends to come: death had accounted for Rossetti and Powell in 1882, for Lord Houghton in 1885, for Philip Marston in 1887, for Inchbold in 1888, for Burton in 1890, and in the next eight years Jowett, Madox Brown, Nichol, Morris and Burne-Jones were all to pass away. And where death had been unsuccessful Watts had triumphed. The occasional readings of his own works, which had till now been permitted, Watts decided were too exciting. Private reading from Dickens was substituted, and Watts submitted with a sigh of mingled boredom and relief to listening during these last years to the thrice-repeated Complete Novels. The ordered life of The Pines, too, took on a new, a more exacting symmetry. Every hour of the day was properly employed, suitably organized. It was the only anodyne to what must otherwise have become an excruciating

boredom. 'Nothing', wrote Gosse, 'could be more motionless than the existence of "the little old genius, and his little old acolyte, in their dull little villa".' Their life was 'spent almost as if within a Leyden jar'. Mrs. Watts-Dunton has recorded the poet's daily time-table, which became set in an unvarying routine, a sort of elaborate, royal etiquette, as if the sovereign ennui of Versailles had come to rest, shorn of its grandeur, in a melancholy suburb. The poet, never an early riser, would breakfast alone in his library on the first floor at ten o'clock, enjoying the *Daily Telegraph*. At eleven he would cross Putney and Wimbledon Common on a walk which lasted two hours, winter and summer, rain or fine, 'pelting along all the time as hard as I can go', whenever he was not peering sentimentally into perambulators or, as he preferred to call them, 'pushwainlings'. On the way home, unvaryingly, he would stop at the Rose and Crown, where a glass of beer would be ready for him. Luncheon followed, and at two-thirty he retired to rest until four. From four till six he would work in his library and then came the readings from Dickens till dinner at eight. After dinner he again worked in his library till bedtime.

The death of his mother in 1896 cloistered him still further. Even the change of scene his visits to her had afforded him was now cut off. The days passed in indistinguishable procession. 'I am beginning', he wrote in 1904 to W. M. Rossetti (who survived him by ten years), 'to lose count of time' and then added pathetically: 'They have got me a really beautiful type for the forthcoming edition of my poems in six volumes: of course it will be sent to you—but not to anyone else—or hardly. Who is there to send them to, for that matter?' Indeed, there was no one; and so he sat up in his room, remote from the world of men, indulging in a limited literary correspondence, unable to believe that it was not the common practice to read at least one Elizabethan or Jacobean drama every day—a relaxation which he varied with the vicarious excitements of novels from the lending library—living, indeed, in an intellectual vacuum which insulated him from the achievements of the new generation of writers. He disliked Stevenson, harshly criticized Yeats, never mentioned Kipling, and wrote to Hardy, who had sent him *The Dynasts*: 'I trust you do not mean to give over your great work in creative romance even for the field of epic or historic drama'.



Indeed, his intellectual pleasures, his enthusiasms, remained constant, formed ultimately, as it were, part of the etiquette of The Pines. To the few carefully selected visitors—handpicked by Watts for their talents or their enthusiasms, such as Sir Max Beerbohm, William Rothenstein and T. J. Wise (Swinburne’s future bibliographer)—he was shown off by that devoted and possessive presence as if he had been some rare and delicate bibelot. His mind lingered in the literary past; he lived in the history of his art. Feuds a century old were more real to him than the events of last week. A reckless guest would be reproved by Watts: ‘We don’t mention Hazlitt’s name here’. Had he not attacked Coleridge? And upstairs in the library the fortunate visitor would be shown the collection of quarto plays and given an enthusiastic discourse on their respective beauties or, perhaps, fired by a chance word, there would be a flow of panegyric, a spate of eulogy, on Shelley, Landor, or Victor Hugo, till Watts anxiously hurried the visitor out. Excitement was another stimulant that must be rationed.

In November 1903 Swinburne caught a chill while walking in the rain which developed into pneumonia. Had the mothering presence of Watts failed to notice the dampness of the poet’s clothes, or had the poet in one of his childish fits of disobedience neglected to change them? Sir Thomas Barlow was called in and saved his life. His lungs remained delicate but he had still six years to live; placid years in which he continued to compose verses, as he admitted, ‘to escape from boredom’. But at Easter in 1909 an epidemic of influenza attacked the household of The Pines. Watts was confined to his room. Swinburne, with no one to watch over him, again contracted a chill to which he paid no attention. Watts did not even realize he was ill till one morning he failed to get up and refused food. His lungs were almost immediately affected. Very quietly he lay in his bed without, so it seemed, any desire to recover. Indeed, there was no longer anything to live for; the links which bound him to the world had been severed one by one; calmly he awaited the resolution of the mystery. Nothing could reconcile him to God, but was there a life after death? ‘I do now,’ he had written in 1882, ‘on the whole, strongly incline to believe in the survival of life—individual and conscious life—after the dissolution of the body.’ By 1 April he was dying. Sir Douglas Powell was called in consultation, but without

avail. On 10 April at 10 a.m., in his seventy-third year, Swinburne died.

Death, if thou wilt, fain would I plead with thee;  
 Canst thou not spare, of all our hopes have built,  
 One shelter where our spirits fain would be,  
 Death, if thou wilt?

And now he would find out.

## CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor,  
 HORIZON,  
 London, W.C.1.

26th April 1949

Dear Sir,

In a footnote to Dr. Glover's last article (in No. 111 of March 1949) of his series of three on 'Freud or Jung' you have asked 'Jungians' to 'withhold replies' until the publication of Dr. Glover's book.

This will allow Dr. Glover's statements the unfair advantage of 'sinking in' before they can be effectively answered. I hope you will therefore at least publish this preliminary and short 'Jungian' view of Dr. Glover's articles, namely that they are a mixture of distortion and misunderstanding, which is obviously motivated by ill will.

Whereas Jung's work certainly leaves room for constructive criticism—as does the work of every great and original thinker—Dr. Glover's affective way of presentation and lack of objectivity result in a complete travesty of Jung's ideas. His appreciation of Jung's work is on the same level as would be an appreciation of Freud's work that tried to represent him as a sex maniac.

His presentation of Jung's political and social views in particular can only be called malicious—needless to say it misrepresents his outlook completely. Dr. Glover tries to score his various points by making a clever selection of passages arbitrarily removed from their context. In this process he does not even shrink from giving his translations a twist not contained in the German original.

At any rate it seems to me a new practice for a scientific discourse to work on the principle of *semper aliquid haeret*. There is no need to say who stands condemned by it.

Yours faithfully,  
 GERHARD ADLER



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